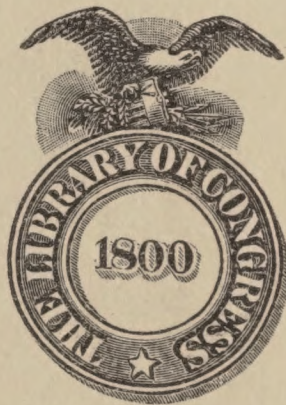


The STORY BOOK HOUSE



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HONOR·WALSH



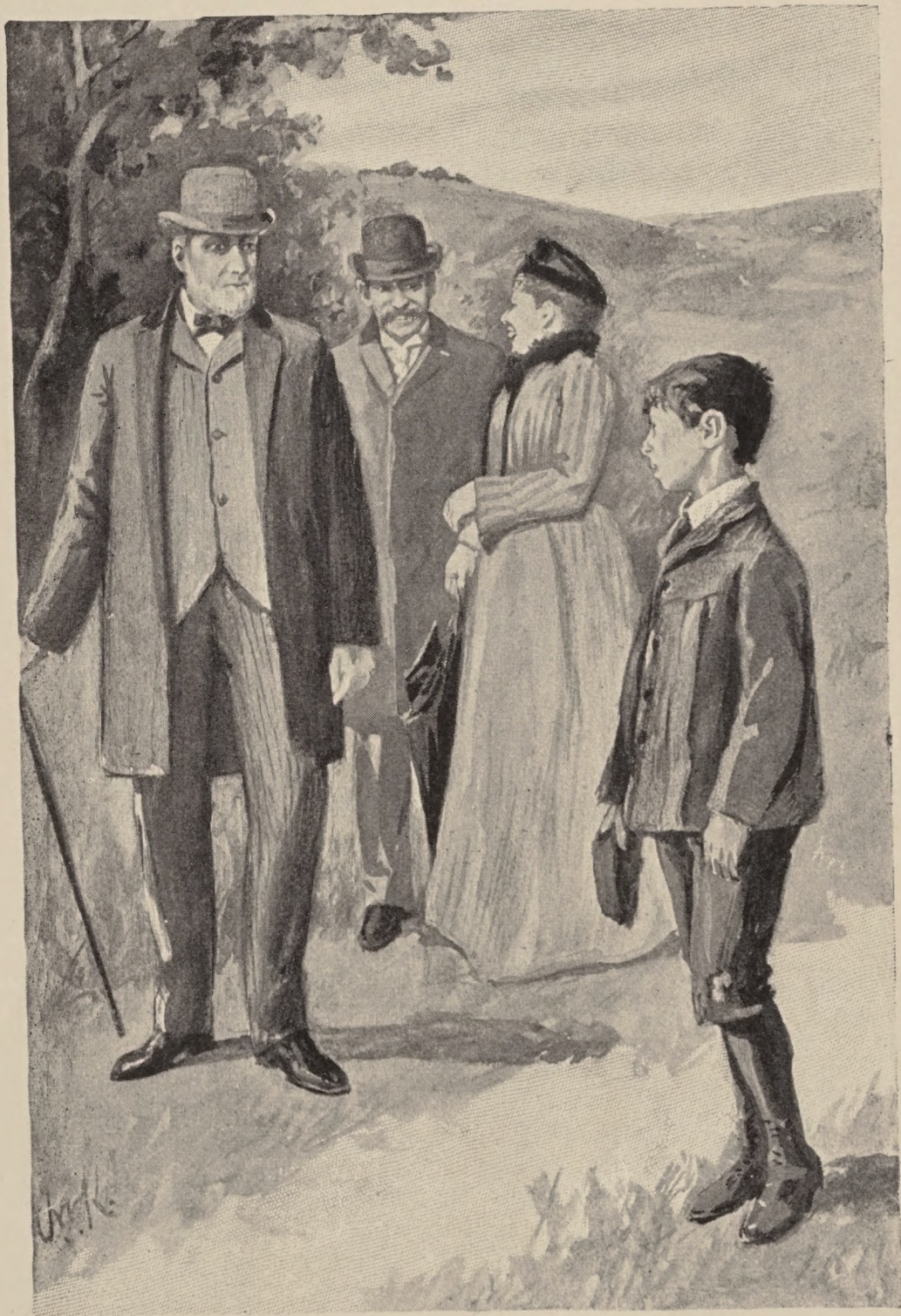
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THE STORY-BOOK HOUSE



“‘SAY IT AGAIN,’ SAYS I.”

THE STORY- BOOK HOUSE

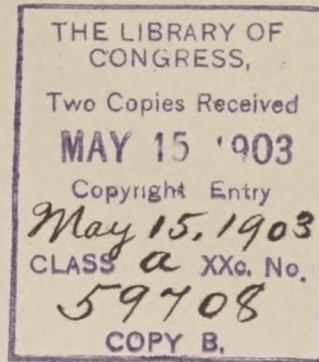
By HONOR WALSH

Illustrated by J. W. KENNEDY



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YANKEE
BOOK

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THE STORY-BOOK HOUSE

CHAPTER I.

THE VERANDAH

ALTHOUGH the historic name of the estate is MountStuart, from time out of mind our old Maryland colonial residence had been called the Storey House. It was in our growing-up days that the place became Story-Bookish, and the mission of this book is to tell you how.

Let us go back a few years, and, while we are about it, we may as well choose early summer as our time of introduction, and the old verandah as our standpoint, view-point — what you will. That dashing Jacobite cavalier, who left his forfeited ancestral home in England to become our great-great-great-great-grandfather in Maryland, had a pair of bonnie blue eyes in his head, as you may see by peeping through the windows into the drawing-room, where his portrait by Mignard

smiles gaily into the faces of all beholders. Excellent eyes, to select a site for his New-World home on the brow of a little hill sheltered by a wall of mountains, and fronted by a panorama of intermountain scenery. Look where you will, the horizon is girt with blue, a myriad tender shades of azure with scarce a dividing line between the cerulean sky and the heaven-hued Blue Ridge Mountains. The Potomac dances in the June sunlight; the road skirts our grounds, and the bank of the river is just across the road. Our little boat-house is there yet, but the new bank-steps Uncle Papa made for us one memorable day are sadly weather-worn now.

The garden runs down to the thorn hedge: it is a tangle of roses, you observe. Grandmamma Storey was passionately fond of the royal flowers, — I think that there must be as many as fifty of her potpourri jars about the house. As you see, the Crimson Ramblers have hidden the tall columns of our verandah; you may look upon our Blue Mountain landscapes through frames of rosy sweetness. Our grounds are not remarkably well kept, but we like their wildness. (Recollect, I am writing of our childish days. Our grown-up "improvements" belong to the Back Porch Chapter.) In the old slavery days it is likely that the paths were gravelled, the lawns shorn into a green velvet sward, and the shrubbery

clipped to trimness, — but that was long before my time. Sandy Andy, who acted as coachman and general utility, did his best with the garden and orchard in the little time left at his disposal, and he managed to keep one pretty fair stretch of lawn for our games of tennis and croquet. But for his care, the setting of the Story-Book House might have relapsed into the primeval wilderness.

Indeed, as you may guess, we were very much better off than were the greater number of Southern families after the war. Among our own neighbors were ladies and gentlemen of the luxurious old days, left absolutely homeless and penniless, living on the charity of friends, or upon a pittance earned by inexperienced attempts to labor with their poor, inefficient, aristocratic hands. We held our old home, although Grandpapa rented most of the land to a tenant farmer who kept our larder well supplied. Grandmamma Storey's Irish inheritance made ample provision for "the four little Storeys," so even though Mount Stuart had lost the splendors of its ancient prosperity, we had enough and to spare for all our needs.

It is quite as easy to raise the dead and to transport the distant as it is to turn back the pages of time. Let me summon for your inspection the people of the Story-Book House.

Grandpapa first. A tall, grave, scholarly gentle-

man with a stern, handsome face, and keen blue eyes. He had been a colonel in the Confederate cavalry, and looked it. Although he stood to us in place of father and mother, he was not the least bit indulgent; indeed, for years, he seemed to resent our very existence. I'm afraid that we loved Nana better in the old days.

Nana was our dear old nurse. She was as old as Grandpapa; she had been Grandmamma's own maid in Ireland. Grandmamma Storey was an Irish lady, niece of Sir Arthur Manus of Castlemanus, a great beauty in her day, and an heiress as well. Grandpapa had wooed and won her when he was United States consul at Dublin. They had been married only a short time when our great Civil War broke out and Grandpapa came back to wear the gray of the Lost Cause. Dear Grandmamma Storey died when I was seven years old, only a few weeks after that dreadful day when we knew that we had lost papa and mamma. Ever afterward, Nana had been everything to us,—mother, grandmother, nurse, housekeeper, seamstress,—yes, and instructor, too. Very little did Nana know of letters; her knowledge was the wisdom of a loving, loyal heart. We should have learned many a lesson from this faithful servitor; I hope we did. Certainly she taught us more than did any of the poverty-stricken gentlewomen, to whom Grandpapa now

and then entrusted our education. Those poor amateur governesses, what hopelessly pathetic failures they were! I shall say no more of them, gentle, helpless, unpractical Southern ladies, vainly trying to fit themselves to new conditions. As for Nana, her real name was Hannah Lynch, but Frank had renamed his nurse in the lisping days of his babyhood, and "Nana" she remained to the end of her life.

"The Student" was Nana's nephew, — or was it grandnephew? He was "Aily's boy" anyway, but Nana had sister and sister's daughter Aily, and which of these Aileens was mother of our Student I can't recollect now. We used to laugh slyly at Nana when she spoke of Aily's "Stewdent;" little snobs that we were, we felt highly amused at the idea of Nurse Nana's owning a scholarly nephew. We even went so far as to joke about the matter to Grandpapa, who very promptly and properly snubbed us for our pains.

"Only think, she calls him a 'stewdent,' Grandpapa!" said I, with a superior little air.

"Only think! our Irish nurse knows how to give value to the U," replied the old gentleman, with the sarcastic little smile so confusing to my sense of self-importance. "Pity she cannot learn to say 'stoodent' in the peculiar dialect of a little American girl!"

That was the first time Grandpapa heard of the

Student. A long time — maybe a whole year — afterward, Nana received a letter containing troublesome news. The Student was ailing; it would be necessary for him to leave Ireland, where the climate was too damp for his lungs. The next letter was more consoling to Nana; Joseph James was coming to America for the benefit of his health.

In due time the Student arrived. He was tall, thin, red-haired, with a consumptive little stoop to his shoulders. He had very bright dark blue eyes, and he spoke with quite the richest voice I had ever heard. He had tea with us in the nursery on the evening of his arrival, and he readily won our story-loving hearts by telling us a whole “bagful” of fairy-tales. We did not concern ourselves about his scholarship; the Student wasn’t the least little bit pedantic, but Grandpapa found him out.

It was this way: Grandpapa met me in the hall the morning after the Student’s first visit. In his hand he held an open book, — a small, dingy volume printed in queer characters.

“I found this on the hall table. Who has been here?” Grandpapa spoke in tones of unwonted animation; plainly he was interested.

I took the book and turned to the fly-leaf. “Joseph James Cleary,” I read. “Oh, that must be the Student! He was here last night.”

“Who was here?”

“The Student — Nana’s nephew, you know, Grandpapa. Don’t you recollect — ?”

But my grandfather was hurrying up the stairs, and I, following, reached the nursery in time to hear him questioning Nana.

“Your nephew, this is his book? he is a Greek scholar?”

“Ah, then, but he’s every kind of a scholar, sir, and that’s his book I don’t doubt, if it’s a scholar’s book.” Nana was sublime in her pride of kinship with the Student.

“A Greek Testament!” muttered Grandpapa, turning the leaves rapidly. “H’m! I should like to meet this young man, to meet him, to meet him at dinner, you know.”

Nana flushed with proud delight. Grandpapa was extremely particular about his dinner-guests. I was a little surprised. I had not then fathomed the depth of my grandfather’s veneration for mental attainments; I recollected only that the Malsters and the Rollyers and the Loomings and the other lately wealthy folk who had really brought prosperity to Storeytown, had met with no courtesies from “the first gintleman of the county,” as Nana styled my father’s father. I recalled, too, with a sense of grievance, that neither Frank nor I had ever had the honor of dining with Grandpapa. He could not stand im-

mature society; he had no patience with superficiality, purse-pride, chit-chat; in truth, he was not easy to please, and preferred solitude to irksome companionship. Even Madame dined with him only on her days of arrival and departure. I had thought him proud, and yet here he was treating the Student as an equal, — the poor Student whose very passage-money had been paid by our old nurse.

That was the beginning of a friendship that never faltered. Grandpapa was never so happy as when the Student came to the old house. He always spent his vacations at Mount Stuart, the honored guest of the master. Night after night they pored over old books and manuscripts. If memory serves me well, I think they went into Chaldean-Semitic “ inscriptions ” during that first vacation. Greek, Latin, and Hebrew they were past masters in — at least I supposed so. I know now that the Student was a natural-born delver into the lore of dead ages. Yet how few connect his name with that sort of thing nowadays! He is the famous pulpit orator, the fluent discourser on social topics, the energetic reformer of municipal abuses, — ay de mi! I am wandering from the verandah of the Story-Book House. The dear old house! . . . Well . . .

The Student suddenly dropped the dead languages, and began to study Chinese. My grand-

father followed him with unnaturally beautiful patience. The hideous India-ink hieroglyphs were disposed of in time, and then there was another change. The Student was finding himself. He gave up the idea of going on a mission to the heathen of the Orient; he had found pagans a-plenty at home. Immediately after his ordination he began his life-work. We seldom saw him then, but when Grandpapa began to take trips to the city, we guessed that he was going to seek "Aily's boy."

Needless to say, by that time we were more than convinced of the Student's intellect; indeed, we considered him a heaven-born genius; nothing inferior could have so moved our immovable grandfather. Frank was growing up, but Frank's talents made little or no impression on the old gentleman. After all, you know, Frank is more dexterous than deep-thoughted. Oh, yes, I admit the brilliancy of that Congressional speech. . . . Again I am going away from the verandah. Halte-là! . . . All that the verandah must do is to introduce the people of the Story-Book House as they were, — as they were! The Student is a story in himself, but I need say no more of him here than that he was a capital storyteller!

"Uncle Papa" was a thin little man of forty, perhaps; a native of Alsace-Lorraine. He owned

a nice little cottage and garden on the road between the Story-Book House and the town, Storeytown. He had been soldier, sailor, and merchant in his time. A little money had come to him suddenly, for he had saved nothing. The money was either pension or salvage, I am not certain which, but, small though the sum was, dear Uncle Papa had never had so much before at one time. In a fit of providence, aided by a longing for the green countryside, he had bought the little mountain home for a mere song. He had a miniature farm in his tiny field, which yielded enough produce for his simple wants, and, sitting outside his cottage door on a summer evening, playing the fiddle, or up at the Story-Book House on the hill spinning yarns for the little fatherless children, he was the happiest man of his size in this great world.

We introduced ourselves to Uncle Papa a few weeks after he had settled on the mountainside, — introduced ourselves by breaking the traces just as we passed his gate. Frank was driving; Madame and I sat on the back seat of our old surrey, and Madame, who, for a Southern woman, was singularly nervous about horses, screamed in deadly fear when Frank nonchalantly noticed the little accident. In another moment the dark, thin little stranger stood beside the carriage, his broad-brimmed hat in his hand. Madame had cried,

"*Mon Dieu!*" and so Uncle Papa said, "*Bonjour, Madame,*" and "*Permettez-moi,*" as he stepped forward to examine the harness. But presently he spoke in excellent English, assuring us of the trifling nature of the mishap, which indeed he remedied in a very few minutes with one of his wonderful knives. Uncle Papa had a whole arsenal of ingeniously contrived pocket-knives; by and by we had so much confidence in his "handiness" that we were quite convinced that he manufactured every one of them himself.

Dear Uncle Papa! he was only too clever. As the phrase goes, he could turn his hand to anything; therefore he turned it to everything, and a constantly turning hand cannot retain much money. He could sing a song, paint a picture, write a sonnet, cook a dinner, make a speech, or play the violin, and he did each and all with uniform ability — which is not saying much, you understand.

In a very short time we became fast friends. In truth, Uncle Papa was more than friend; he was our good comrade, our jolly playmate. Grandpapa took little notice of him; whenever he encountered him he treated him with contemptuous tolerance, as one who kept the troublesome children from bothering the head of the house.

Brose gave our dear friend his familiar title. His right name, you must know, was Adolph

Papelonne. During our Alsatian neighbor's second visit, and just after he had told us a story in his own charming way, little Brose made a speech. Said he to Monsieur Papelonne:

"Misser Papa-alone, your name is too big. We have no papa, we have no nuncle; we are alone, on'y for Gran'pa and Nana-dear, and we love you. Won't you be our Nuncle Papa?"

To Uncle Papa we owed much of the happiness of our childhood. He got Grandpapa's permission to arrange birthday parties for us, and mid-summer picnics and Christmas festivities. Nana, who had mistrusted his foreign ways at first, was soon won by his devotion to her darlings. He was so willing to help the cook, that, even when cross Miranda was in charge, Uncle Papa was free of the kitchen.

Never was a feast that he did not make more festal — dear Uncle Papa! What wonderful yellow roses he could carve out of turnips! How entirely delightful were his birds' nests of jelly, with globules of blanc-mange to represent the eggs! And such funny Chinese gentlemen as he constructed from oranges and bananas were never seen, I'm sure, even in China!

But his stories — ah, his stories were the best of his accomplishments, after all! We all agreed that the very choicest of illustrated books could not come up to Uncle Papa's spoken narratives.

For his gestures were the best illustrations possible: watching his hands, you could see the characters run or walk or dance or sleep or quarrel or whatever they were doing in the story of the moment. His eyes would widen with wonder or narrow with cunning; his cheeks would puff out in a boast or draw in with a whine, and as for his voice, it held every imaginable range of emotion that could make the sentiment of a tale better or worse as the case might call for.

A story without Uncle Papa's gestures, expressions, and inflections is better than no story at all, of course. But when I think of the charm of his narration, when I recollect that the commonest of primer fables had a peculiar thrill of interest when told by him, I am almost tempted not to relate any of his stories.

Grandpapa, Nana, the Student, Uncle Papa. Next comes Madame, or Grandme, as we called her. Perhaps I am wrong to say that Grandpapa merely tolerated Uncle Papa, because his feeling for Madame Gratiot was only toleration, and I'm very sure he treated Uncle Papa with more friendship than he ever showed Madame, to whom his bearing was frigidly polite, nothing more. Madame, so self-styled, was an elderly maiden lady from New Orleans, dear dead mamma's own aunt, our grandaunt, and a Creole to the fingertips. She was not a regular member of our

family, but she came twice a year, and each time she remained with us for two months.

I know now that Grandpapa thought Madame should have made her home with us. He knew that our peculiar household required a lady's management, and naturally he supposed that mamma's nearest relative would take an affectionate interest in the motherless little flock. But indeed, Nana was better than any "Madame Grandme."

When Grandme was with us she was very kind. She taught us French and deportment and old-fashioned dancing. She was a very pretty, well-preserved, dressy little lady; Uncle Papa adored her in respectful silence. When she was not with us, she was visiting her half-sister in Quebec, or her "step-grandnephew" in New Orleans.

"I so dislike to leave my pretty Estelle's pretty ones," she used to say. "But what will you have? I must share my time with the others; I cannot be selfish."

Was Grandme really unselfish? I cannot say; I know that she spent the winter in New Orleans, where it was nice and warm; the summer in Quebec, where it was nice and cool; and the spring and autumn in our mountain home, where it was nice and balmy. But she liked to be nice, our Grandme.

When she came on her semi-annual visit, Nana

always had the second-best room ready for her, — Grandpapa occupied the best, of course, — and the keys of the house were placed on her dressing-table, Nana voluntarily and most generously resigning all charge during the Madame's stay. There were many fine ladies in the world not half so finely principled as our Nana, let me tell you, and well Grandpapa knew it.

Other occasionals were Captain Storey, our second cousin, and his sister, Mrs. Campion, a fashionable lady from Washington, who paid us a brief visit now and then. Then there were the Curtises, our New York connections, and the Babbingtons from Richmond, and the Websters from Philadelphia, and other kinsfolk who came now and then to the house on the mountain, whose master was "so eccentric" that he did not care for society. Perhaps my grandfather *was* eccentric in his preference for solitude; if so, he had his troublous reasons.

And this brings me at last to papa and mamma. When Nellie, our youngest, was only a year old, mamma was very delicate. It was winter-time, and quite cold on the mountain. So papa thought it would do her good to go home to New Orleans and spend a few months with her mother. At the last moment they decided to leave the baby with Grandmamma Storey and Nana. Grandpapa accompanied papa and mamma to Washing-

ton, where they took the train for the South. He never saw his only son or his son's wife again.

No, they were not killed in a railway accident; they were victims of the epidemic of yellow fever which slew its thousands that dreadful year. Grandmamma Gratiot, mamma, and papa died within a week. Grandpapa Storey shut himself up in his room for three days after the terrible news came to him, but dear Grandmamma Storey — I recollect her perfectly — went about her duties with a brave little smile on her lips, and tried hard to love us for father and mother and all. But her heart had been wrapped up in papa, her only son, her only child. And when every one saw that sorrow was making Grandpapa cold and stern, no one but Nana knew that Grandmamma was smiling to hide her tears, and even Nana could not guess that her dearly loved lady was dying of grief.

Now for ourselves. Nellie, always our baby, regularly beautiful, golden-haired, blue-eyed, dazzlingly fair, with Grandmamma Storey's noble features, and dear mamma's tiny, slim, arched feet and infantine hands. She is sometimes called the Maryland Beauty nowadays, but as a matter of fact, she is not at all a Southern type. Frank, who is quite proud of his beauty-sister, says that she is like a very lovely English girl with a French finish.

Brose was only a year older than Nellie, — he had been called Ambrose, after papa, and he was the dearest, most winsomely blundering little boy that ever gladdened a lonely house. . . . Oh, Brose, Brose, my brother! . . . Dearie, I see you in every corner of your own Story-Book House. . . . I wonder if you know?

Calvert Cecil was the little brother who came between Brose and me; named for Grandpapa, to us he was a family name, and nothing more: he died in his cradle, a month-old babe, when Frank and I were too young to store remembrances.

Frank is my senior by three years. In the Story-Book days he was a fine, fair, handsome, self-confident boy; I, a dark, slim, pale, shy little girl, and we had other points of difference, which you may discover before we reach the Back Porch epilogue of the Story-Book House.

CHAPTER II.

THE COBBLER'S HEELS

SOMETIMES Grandpapa would trouble himself so far as to help us in our historical readings. One winter he laid out a course of French history for us, and when Madame came in the spring she was highly pleased with the progress we had made. "It is well for you, my pets, to know the glory of your ancestral country," she said.

"But that's England," said Frank. "Sir Francis Storey —"

"Ireland," put in Nana, "Sir Arthur Manus —"

"France," asserted Madame, sweetly. "The Vicomte de Gratiot, founder of the family in Louisiana, came from Perpignan."

"But we comed from Maryland," said Brose, stoutly. "We're 'Mericans, we are."

"We're a mixture, surely," said I. "English, Irish, French —"

"And Spanish," continued Madame Grandme. "Your ancestor crossed the Pyrenees for his

bride, Juanita de Villena, daughter of the brave Castilian hidalgo, Don Fernando de Villena. A mixture, yes, Estelle, but a mixture of the best! What the French call *crème de la crème*, cream of creams, as we might say," she explained, turning to Nana.

"Just so," agreed our old nurse. "The Manuses would be the richest cream o' the lot, I do be thinking, real old gentry!—though I make no doubt the Spanish cream'd be the yellowest like. But it's true for the Student, there must be a-many a word alike in French and Irish. Sure, the common people in Ireland say 'crame' for cream,—think o' that!" Nana cherished a firm belief in the correctness of her own accent, and, indeed, her brogue was of the slightest.

Now and then, when Uncle Papa came to see us, we were anxious to show him how much we knew about La Patrie, and we made him talk to us about the France that was and the France that is. How delightedly he hailed our interest in a subject so ever-dear to him! Sometimes he would tell us a story "of your lesson-times, mes enfants." One of these tales was what the Student, who was listening, dubbed "an elevating narrative." I think that the title given to the story by Uncle Papa was "The Rise of the

Sieur Gaston de Lallier." As I am retailing the tale I shall rename it also. I am not fond of long names.

THE COBBLER'S HEELS

Long ago France and Brittany were separated. It was not until the sole heiress of Brittany, the young and beautiful Duchess Anne, was wedded to the French King Charles the Eighth that the nations were gloriously reunited. The little Breton duchess, lame though she was, made a most queenly young queen. By and by a baby prince came to gladden the royal household, and every one was delighted, — the Ugly King, the pretty queen, and the loyal people. So you may be certain that there was mourning all over the land when the so-welcomed child of France fell sick and died!

Yet some there were that were not ill-pleased when the royal pair were left childless. You must know that, although the Ugly King had many virtues, he lacked the crown virtue of popularity. He was no favorite. And so, a few far-seeing folk said, one to another:

"If *le bon Dieu* sends no other prince to our gracious young queen, Prince Louis d'Orleans, whom we all love, must become king when the Ugly King dies. Shall we lose fair Brittany then, think you? Ah, well! it is worth

even so great a loss to have once more a kingly king. For Louis is a gallant prince, and he will wear the French crown right royally!"

In Brittany, Anne's subjects cared little for the Ugly King. The marriage had not pleased them; they preferred the independence of Brittany to the glory of France. And if the young queen should return, a childless widow, everything would be as it had been.

One fair day, two Breton lads, Jean Duval and Gaston Lallier, were watching sheep upon a hillside overlooking the beautiful old town of Rennes. The boys were clad in the coarse yet picturesque attire of the Breton peasantry, which, even down to this age of no-color, is the gayest costume imaginable. The Bretons believe in brilliant dyes, *mes enfants*!

After a long, meditative silence, Gaston, the younger of the two, spoke. Said he:

"Jean, what wouldst thou be?"

"I? Alack, and save your little wit, good Monsieur Donaught, I would fain be what I am, and what my father is."

"A shepherd?"

"Ay, a shepherd. Hark ye, friend, an ye need not mouth the word so scorningly, or perchance ye may see that I can turn this my shepherd's crook into a fitting cudgel!"

Gaston looked steadily at the older boy, and made no sign of anger as he answered:

"Thou wouldst fain be what thy father is, Jean? Of a truth, I have never seen my god-father so choleric!"

Big sixteen-year old Jean flushed at the rebuke so quietly and courageously administered by the girlish-looking lad of twelve.

"Right, right, boy!" he cried, hastily. "Let's have no more on't. Thou art concerned about mine occupation. What is thine to be?"

The boy sighed, and dug his sabot into the soil.

"If son must follow father, then must I be a cobbler of shoes," he said, bitterly. "But, oh! what would I not be, what would I not be if I could?"

"What?" queried a new voice. Jean was watching his sheep none the less carefully that he half-reclined upon the grassy slope while he held his office. Gaston lay at full length, his head supported with one hand in his usual dreamy fashion. He rose with easy courtesy to greet the newcomer.

It was Pierre Duval, the father of Jean, an old man clad in a coarse smock-frock. His eyes were soft and tender for all his watching of many flocks, and he looked kindly at Gaston.

"What would'st thou not be?" he repeated.

"If I had my way, good Father Duval, I would not be the shoemaker of Rennes."

The old shepherd smiled indulgently.

"St. Crispin was a shoemaker," he said, "and the good St. Joseph was a carpenter."

"And St. Louis was a king!" supplemented the boy, quietly.

Old Pierre stared, but Jean chuckled.

"This stripling would fain take a royal road to heaven," he said.

"What ails the lad?" asked Pierre.

"He — oh, he hath been touched with a court fever. He saw a cavalcade pass through yon town yestere'en, and the falfals have pleased his fancy."

"Ah," said the father, musingly, "he should have seen the Lady Anne when she held court at Rennes."

"I remember her!" broke in Gaston. "So good, so beautiful! She rode on a white palfrey and her long hair was braided with gold. I was but six years old, and my father lifted me up to see, and I cried out that it was our Blessed Lady come down from heaven, and the young duchess heard me, and saw me, and she would have me brought near her, and she kissed me, and then she rode away with the Ugly King. And I — oh, I would give all my hopes but to be a page in her train!"

The old shepherd's practised eyes were upon the browsing sheep. He turned them once more to the impulsive lad. "My little Gaston," he said, "it is not seemly for a Breton boy to wish to be a French page. My Jean hath no relish for the life that wears a court livery, and yet thou hungerest for it."

"Ay," put in Big Jean, "he thinks of the brocade and the sarcenet and a curling plume in a velvet cap. He is half-maiden, this Gaston."

"Not he," said Pierre. "Say, rather, he is half-child. Yea, but it is brave, the royal show, and our Lady Anne is queen in good sooth of France and of Brittany. But for her pages will she have none but those of noble blood unless —"

He paused, and Gaston, with quick comprehension, supplied the exception.

"Unless one should render her a good service?" he hazarded.

The old man smiled approvingly.

"Well understood!" he cried. "My little Gaston, these old arms have held our queen many a time and oft, for Jean's mother, blessed be her soul in heaven! was the nurse of Lady Anne. It so happened," he went on, carefully choosing his words, "It so happened that I was able to render a good service to the old duke when our royal duchess was yet a child. The

secret of that service is — buried with him, — and so shall it be buried with me, but unto his daughter he said these words: ‘You will grant to Father Duval whatever he shall ask.’ Ten times did she send for me, and each time would she say: ‘And what do you want now, Father Duval?’ And I, for the good God had provided me with plenty of sheep and plenty of grass, I answered her always that I wanted for nothing. And yet for thee I will ask a boon if thou wilt be guided by me.”

Gaston’s eyes sparkled. He was a comely lad, tall for his twelve years and erect as a sycamore. His doublet was of coarse scarlet homespun, but he wore it with the grace of childhood. The upland breeze blew his bright, rough hair about his ears, framing a face of maidenly beauty.

“Godfather Duval!” he cried, clasping his slender hands, “I promise thee my submission!”

“Good!” said Pierre. “Now list to me. The service that I rendered to my lord the duke I could not have done had I been but a tender of sheep. In my youth my father said to me: ‘Thou must learn two crafts, so that if one shall fail thee, thou canst turn to another. I will teach thee to care for my sheep, but something else must thou know.’

“And I, obeying him, went to Bourget, the armorer, and from him I learned to fashion the

steel plates into battle attire. The advice of my father I have given to my son, and Jean is as much farrier as shepherd. Thou shalt be page to our gracious queen, and thou shalt also be — ”

“ An armorer? ”

“ Nay, a maker of shoes.”

Gaston hung his head in disappointment for a minute. When he looked up his face was clouded, and when he spoke there was a sob in his voice.

“ I have promised, and to my promise will I cleave, godfather. And yet I need not say that I cannot learn to make shoes in a week, nay, nor in a month.”

“ I will give thee a year,” said Pierre. “ Yes, yes, I know thou wouldst fain be away with the gay court, and if thou art still of the same mind at the year’s end, I will take thee myself to Paris, where I have a kinsman. Eh, but thou must make for him a brave pair of shoes, red, with trimmings of gilt. So shall I judge thy skill, my godson.”

“ Be it so,” said Gaston, firmly. “ I thank you, godfather. I will begin my apprenticeship at once — good day! ”

Jean and his father watched the light figure until it disappeared behind a distant cottage.

“ A handsome stripling,” commented the old man. “ Methinks our royal lady will needs be proud of her Breton page.”

“Ay,” said Jean; “yet it seems to me but a poor ambition for a Breton to dance attendance at the court of the Ugly King of France.”

“The Ugly King hath a lovely queen,” replied Pierre. “’Twas a thousand pities that the little Dauphin should have died. There was one, half-French, half-Breton, who would have been a king indeed. But the good God knows best.”

“The good God did not will Brittany to be joined to France,” said sturdy Jean. “And if the Ugly King should die, there is no little Dauphin to prevent the queen from leaving France and returning to rule Brittany.”

“Truly, it is a world of changes,” murmured the old man. “Where the fagots blazed around Jeanne, the shepherdess of blessed memory, they have placed bronzes in her honor, so doth my kinsman Callon tell me, and he hath travelled much.”

“One need not travel to see changes,” said Jean; “surely it is a change when Sir Gaston becomes Sir Cobbler!”

“Sir Gaston,” to the astonishment and delight of his father, worked faithfully and well. In a few months he had mastered all the difficulties of Crispin’s craft, and so delicate was his touch and so excellent his fancy that Lallier Père set him upon the orders for the gentry — shoes of brocade, of silk, and of satin, broad-toed and puffed

for the knights, and daintily pointed for the ladies.

One day Gaston paused in his work. He had finished a pair of pale blue satin buskins for the Dame du Mornay, and was lacing the eyelets with a silver cord.

"Father," said he, "didst ever make shoes for the queen?"

Nicholas Lallier sighed.

"Nay, not for the queen," he replied. "She hath her court cordonnier, a Parisian artist truly. When she was Duchess of Brittany, she asked one day for the shoemaker of Rennes. I was taken to her. 'I mind me,' said she, 'not to trust these false French, even with the making of my footgear. You, Lallier, shall make me a Breton pair of shoes.'

"And with that she gave me a piece of brocade, and I took my measurements with a doubting heart. I had not thy taste, boy, and I knew that she who had had the best workmanship of the clever French would flout mine effort. Yet mine not to reason, but to obey. I made the shoes with scrupulous care, and I carried them to her."

He stopped suddenly.

"Well?" cried Gaston, deeply interested.
"Prythee, go on, father."

"Our gracious lady hath a quick temper," said

Nicholas, apologetically; "she was then but sixteen, and she took the shoes in her hand and she flung them at my pate."

He rubbed his head so ruefully at the recollection that Gaston, respectful and filial though he was, could not refrain from laughing.

"And the *bottines*?" he said.

"I took them back with me. She bade me keep them; she would have none o' them."

Nicholas put down the baker's sabot, upon which he had been working, and, reaching to a shelf above his head, he drew down a parcel wrapped in a linen cloth. Carefully undoing it, he brought to view the abused shoes. They were of a rich yellow brocade, and he had laced them with vivid grass green. It was not a happy combination.

"Ah!" cried Gaston, "they should have been laced with blue or with scarlet, father. But of a surety, the *bottines* are too small?"

"Nay, the Lady Anne hath a tiny foot, but she liked not the fashion of the insoles. I had forgot her lameness and I had not padded the left shoe."

Gaston examined the little shoes lovingly.

"I should like to make a pair," he said.

And then he spoke to his father of his hopes, and how Godfather Duval had promised to take him to Paris as soon as he should be able to

fashion a pair of red shoes for the Burgher Callon.

Contrary to Gaston's expectations, Nicholas Lallier was enthusiastic over the project.

"Thou art skilled enough now, my good lad," he said. "I will get thee whatever seemeth right. Would thy mother had lived to see her pretty stripling at the court of the queen!"

So the scarlet leather shoes were made, and Gaston brought them for inspection to his godfather. They were cunningly slashed, and puffed with satin of silver gray, and the flaps were gorgeous in gilt.

"The shoes for thy kinsman!" announced the boy, placing them on the table in the shepherd's cottage.

"It is scarce six months since we spoke of it," said Pierre, "and I gave thee a year. Yet am I pleased with the work," he continued, "and my promise will I keep. So it would beseem us to prepare for the journey."

But even as he was speaking, Big Jean entered, his usually stolid manner ruffled to excitement. "I have come from the castle gate," he said, "where a courier is just arrived from Amboise. King Charles is dead!"

His listeners sprang to their feet. "The King of France!" cried Pierre.

"The Ugly King!" exclaimed Gaston, at the same instant.

"Ay," said Jean; "we are Bretons once more. The queen will come to Rennes."

"And our journey?" queried Gaston, looking at his godfather wistfully.

"We must await the Lady Anne," decided Pierre.

Months passed, however, before Anne of Brittany visited her native place. At last it was announced that she was coming, and for a time the tradesmen of Rennes were kept busy in making preparations for her reception. Nicholas Lallier and his son visited the mercer and the tailor to give orders for a costume of fine wool designed by Gaston himself, who hated the glaring reds and greens and purples beloved by the peasants of Brittany. The doublet was of soft buff color and the long hose were blue. His jaunty cap was blue and his shoes, made by himself, were little masterpieces of tawny lamb-skin.

"Long legs, blue eyes, hair of gold, — a blue and golden boy!" said the tailor's wife, admiringly. "Our little Breton is like an English prince!"

With his usual sense, Pierre Duval waited until the tumult was over and the queen with her ladies had withdrawn into the castle before he

presented Gaston. His name was sufficient passport, and with the boy, he soon stood in the presence of the ex-Queen of France. Anne was still in mourning, and never had she appeared more beautiful. She was then two and twenty, imperious, yet kind.

"Welcome, my good old friend!" she cried. The old man knelt and kissed her extended hand. Then he rose and brought Gaston forward. An involuntary murmur of admiration broke from the group of ladies behind the queen. Anne's dark eyes softened.

"A comely stripling!" she exclaimed.

There was a flush on Gaston's smooth cheeks, and his blue eyes were brilliant with excitement. He swept his cap backward, and bent his knee, in true knightly fashion, to his chosen ladye. Anne placed her little hand caressingly on his bright head.

"His name?" she queried.

"Gaston Lallier, your Majesty," said Pierre.

"A good name," she mused, "and yet it seemeth, somehow, incomplete; Lallier!"

"The name is scarce familiar to your Majesty," ventured Pierre. "The lad is the son of the shoemaker of Rennes."

The queen looked annoyed.

"This lad?" she exclaimed, incredulously.

"Why, Harry of England would be proud of

such a son! Nay, good Father Duval, this is never a child of the people."

"He is the son of Lallier the shoemaker," affirmed the old man.

"Eh, I remember that man," said the queen, laughing. "I flung a pair of shoes at his head in this very castle. Thou'rt in brave attire for a cobbler's son, young sir!"

Gaston blushed hotly and looked appealingly at his godfather. Pierre advanced to the rescue at once.

"Your Majesty's noble father," said he, "requested me to ask a boon at the hands of his daughter."

"He did, he did," said Anne, "and ready have I ever been to grant it."

"That prompts me to go on," the shepherd responded, "and now I would ask your Majesty to give this, my godson, a place in your household."

"A shoemaker's son!" murmured Anne.

Pierre was old, but his ears were sharp.

"I ask pardon," he cried. "I see the thing is impossible." And he bowed as if to withdraw.

"Stay!" cried Anne. "I grant it. And more, I will say this to thee, Father Duval, that if the young Breton prove loyal, his future advancement shall be my care."

"My lady," cried Pierre, earnestly, relapsing

into the address of long ago, "I dare swear he will be true!"

In such manner was Gaston received into the queen's household; and when Anne left Rennes the shoemaker and the shepherd kissed the boy farewell with tears of joy, Big Jean looking on grumpily.

Gaston Lallier quickly became a favorite with the queen and with her ladies, though one may be sure there was much jealousy among the duller-witted little sprigs of nobility with whom the child of the people was placed.

One day Anne sent for him. When he entered she said:

"My little Breton, do not let the French feather-heads annoy thee. I will punish them if they taunt thee with thine origin. In my eyes, to be a Breton is a patent of nobility, and the good God has given thee a face for fortune."

Then turning to her ladies, she continued:

"The little brats have been calling him cobbler, and they say that he weareth lumps on his shoes for penance. Let me see thy feet, boy."

Gaston hesitated, and looked from the queen to the ladies. Every face, though curious, was kind. The gentleness and truth of the shoemaker's son had completely won their hearts, already touched by his rare beauty.

He held up his head manfully, although a warmer blush suffused his cheeks.

"Do not misjudge me, fair queen," he said. "I do wear the lumps upon my shoes, and I wear them to make myself appear taller."

The queen's eyes flashed.

"Let me see them," she demanded.

Gaston pulled off his shoe, and Anne turned it over with peculiar interest. The "lump" was a heel of wood fastened in a crude manner.

"Who made it?" she asked, sharply.

Gaston bowed humbly.

"I am a shoemaker's son; I make all my own shoes," he said. "That is why the other pages mock me."

"It seems vanity to wish to appear tall," said the little queen, striving to speak sternly. "Hast no other reason for wearing the lump?"

"There are many good reasons," replied Gaston, eagerly. "It is more comfortable when one is used to it, and it lifts the shoe from contact with the soil."

One of the ladies in waiting, who was just a little shrewder than the others, had been watching the queen's face. At this juncture she spoke:

"Gaston," she said, "I would thou couldst make me a pair of shoes with lumps. I bethink me it is a good device."

"Gladly will I, fair dame," said the boy;

“yet my first service I owe to my royal mistress. If she will accept a pair from my hands, then will I serve thee next.”

“I will try thy folly, since Dame Margaret doth call it a good device,” responded the queen. “Wilt take my foot measure, my little cordonnier?”

“Nay,” answered Gaston. “I have no need of that. For nearly a year have I been fashioning shoes worthy for your Majesty to wear. With your permission I shall bring them hither.”

He left the apartment and returned in a few minutes with a silken casket, which he presented on bended knee to his beloved queen.

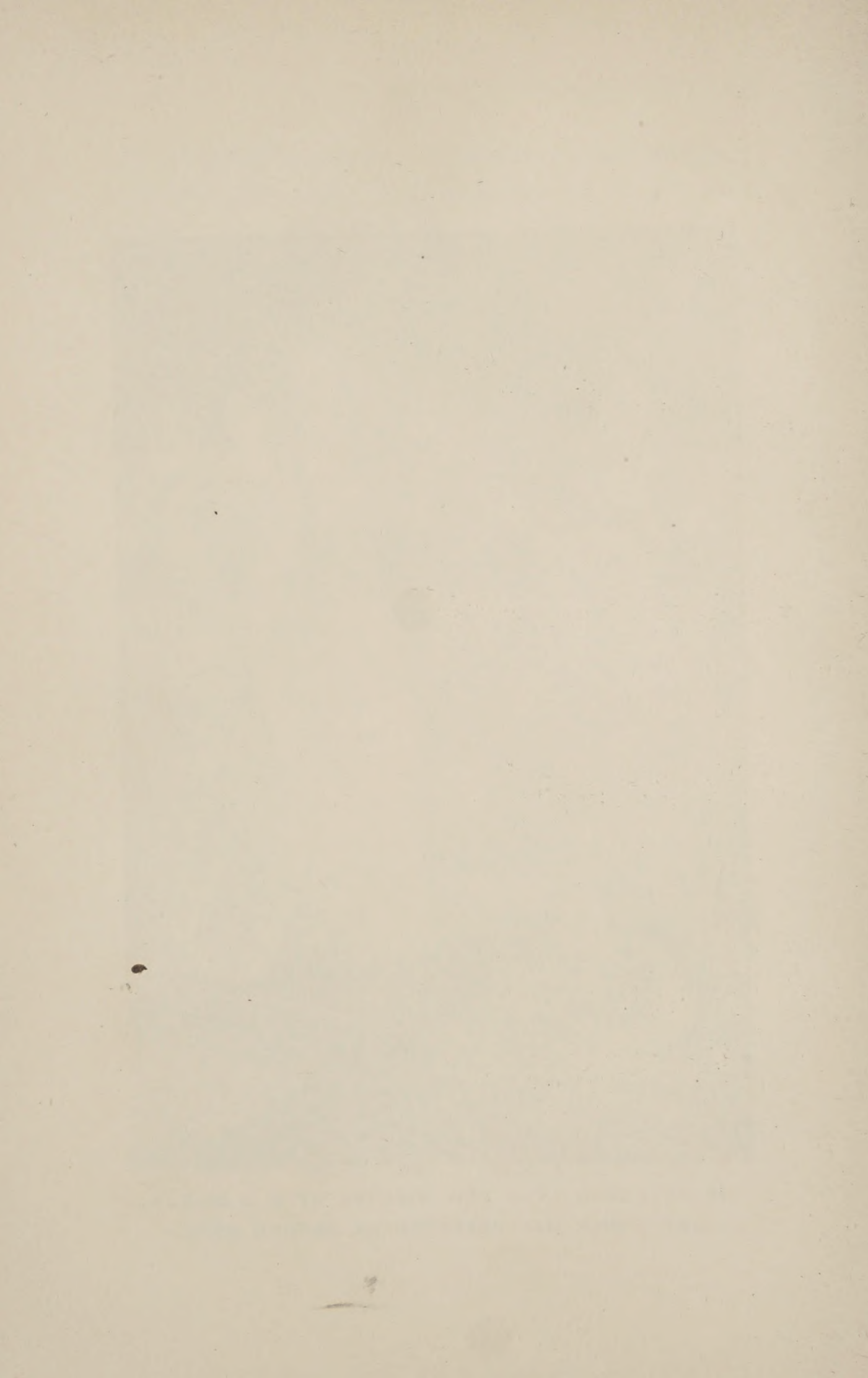
“Long have I sighed for this moment, when I could truly serve thee!” he murmured.

Anne of Brittany uttered an exclamation of delight as she took the dainty *bottines*. They were of white Alexandrine velvet embroidered with gold fleur-de-lis. The “lumps” were carefully shaped and covered with satin. A close observer might have seen that the left one was half an inch higher than the right. The lame queen perceived the difference at once. She bent her searching eyes upon her young compatriot. He trembled and burst into tears.

“I have been presumptuous!” he exclaimed. “But oh! my queen, I would serve thee, I would fain serve thee as best I could!”



“HE RETURNED IN A FEW MINUTES WITH A SILKEN CASKET, WHICH HE PRESENTED ON BENDED KNEE.”



Anne's voice was husky with emotion. "Gaston," she said, "thou hast served me right royally, and I shall remember it as becomes the Queen of France and of Brittany. Nay," she continued, in response to the bewildered looks of her attendants, who knew not what to make of her reclaiming the queenship of France, "do not misunderstand me. I shall wear the beautiful shoes when I wed with King Louis. Did not my little Breton put the French fleur-de-lis upon them?"

Thus, half-sobbing, did the widow of "the Ugly King" announce her marriage with Louis d'Orleans, who had become King Louis XII. of France.

It gave the king and the people much pleasure when they saw the lovely queen on her wedding-day walking without a limp.

"Queen Anne has been cured!" cried every one, but every one did not know that the handsome little page had played doctor.

Gaston's rise was rapid, and it was a pity that old Pierre did not live to see him knighted. Malicious persons said that the white hand of Sieur Gaston de Lallier's coat of arms should in reality have been a foot, since he rose to fortune on a heel.

That he knew how to make a shoe was certainly of great benefit to him in those early days,

but the little cobbler-page developed into a brave and true knight for all that, and he fought like a lion under the victorious fleur-de-lis of Louis and Anne.

Sieur Gaston de Lallier and his noble descendants were famed for courtliness and for courage. Yet no polished speech, no chivalrous deed, no wondrous feat at arms reëchoes their renown across the centuries. The after-glory has vanished, but "the cobbler's heels" are still with us.

Young Gaston's industrious ingenuity, which ennobled a peasant, elevated mankind, so to speak. For might we not still be walking flat-footed if the cobbler-page had not invented heeled shoes for his lame little queen?

CHAPTER III.

POOR NOLLY

WE had been playing tennis on the lawn, and we were very warm and very tired. We sought the shady seclusion of the apple orchard, and found Nana there with her sewing, and the Student buried in one of his Oriental books, while Brose and Nellie played hide-and-seek among the trees. Grandpapa was not to be seen. We all knew that he was taking his regular afternoon nap, but no one dared to speak of that. The old gentleman couldn't stand the suspicion that he was obliged to indulge in a senile siesta. To the end of his days he fancied that his daily slumber was a perfectly secret institution.

Nana was having what she would have called "a silent chat" with her beloved Student. Every once in awhile she would look up from her work, and, tracing certain family resemblances in the poise of her nephew's ruddy head, the shape of his nose, the tilt of his chin, the very bend in his shoulders, her lips would move in satisfied, inaudi-

ble comment. Rudely we interrupted her delightful meditations.

“ Oh, dear, I’m tired enough to collapse! ” I grumbled, as I flung myself on the ground beneath the shade of the splendid old Ben Davis. I had lost — lost persistently, tantalizingly. Frank, as tired as I, was more buoyant. He had won every game. Now Frank in triumph was a far more disagreeable being than Frank in defeat. A little humility was — and is — very becoming to my tall brother. How he boasted that warm afternoon when we were all only too willing to be a little cross! I was openly surly; Nana began to pucker her brows; and, by and by, the Student closed his book, and fixed his eyes on Frank with a whimsical air of melancholy resignation. The boaster exhausted the details of our little contest, and then he ran back to Commencement Day to tell of his victories over the other boys in his class. He was especially severe on the class dunce, by way of comparison.

“ And, think of it, Professor Hallowell said that I might yet be outclassed by that ninny; — told the poor goose that tarradiddle to his very face! I know it was all for my benefit; some teachers have a spite against their star pupils anyway. As if it were possible for that slow-coach to get ahead of *me!* ”

“ Maybe the Professor thought that encourage-

ment was better for the ninny than for the — the star?" suggested the Student, unsmilingly. "Then, you know, slow-coaches are sometimes transformed into speed-makers, automobiles, lightning expresses, afternoon 'fliers,' and all that sort of thing. It's — almost — too — warm — to tell a story —"

"But you'll tell one? Oh, you are a *dear!*" No sooner had I uttered these words than I reddened with vexation. There was no sign of a smile in those grave, bright eyes, and yet I knew that our Student was laughing at my girlish outburst. Well, he was a dear — though I never said so again.

"Go in and tell Aunt Dooney to make some lemonade, there's a good boy. And she'll give you some caraway cookies if you'll talk sweet to her."

"Order for me?" asked the Student, unmoved and unmoving.

"No; Frank, I mean. Do go, Frank; it will put us all in a good humor for the story. The Student won't tell a word until you return."

"Now, that's orders," commented the Student. "But, if I'm really a dear, it's very odd that I can't be trusted to talk sweet to the cook!"

Nana laughed, — as if teasing were a joke!

"It takes genius to get on the right side of Aunt Dooney," I retorted.

Presently the genius returned, laden with the reward of his efforts, and we forgave him his bragging while we drank old Aunt Dooney's incomparable lemonade. I can see the group yet under the venerable apple-tree; the matronly nurse, the gaunt, deep-eyed Student, the high-spirited, handsome boy, the girl — myself — a pale little creature, top-heavy with too much hair. Yes, I seem to see that group — unseeable now on earth — and I fancy that I can hear the slow, rich, vibrant accents of the Student's voice as he told us the story of Poor Nolly.

NOLLY IN THE DAME SCHOOL

Mistress Elizabeth Delap, schoolmistress for small boys in the little Irish village of Lissoy, shook her wigged head, as was her fashion when she had reason to be cross. She was like a picture in her tucker of spotless white muslin and her cap of Limerick lace. Her wig was a very pretty one indeed for a village teacher of some two hundred years ago, when it wasn't "respectable" to wear one's own hair. So far as years counted, Mistress Delap was young, but she was pedagogy personified, chalky of cheek, slaty of eye. Poor Nolly used to compare her nose to an inverted interrogation point, her lips to a brace, her thin fingers to the goose-quill pens, of

which she kept a goodly stock upon her platform. A born school-teacher, she took a proper pride in her profession, although she knew nothing of our modern methods of moulding the minds of children as we would mould our own future if we could.

Mistress Delap's companion on this occasion was Schoolmaster Byrne, who taught boys aged from six to nine years. Mistress Delap received her pupils when they had reached the age of three, and there was no kindergarten business then, mind you! When she turned them over to Master Byrne at the completion of their fifth year, they were supposed to be just as knowing as a boy of ten would be nowadays. They began their Latin grammar with Master Byrne, and by and by he introduced them to the mysteries of Euclid. Those good old times! Those poor old children!

Before the two teachers stood a pair of very small boys. One of them had brought out the ever easily produced temper of Mistress Delap.

"Verily, he is naught but a wooden-head!" she cried.

"And the other lad?" queried the master.

"He! Look at him, and mark the difference."

"The other lad" was tall for his years, and his limbs had the supple grace of one to the manner born. His nobly formed head was crowned

with an abundance of soft curls, his eyes were brightly inquisitive, and his skin had the rosy freshness characteristic of children of the green island. A marked contrast to his short, stocky, "wooden-head" companion, he of the tousled hair, the dull eyes, the face of leaden homeliness.

"Now, I mean to examine both of them, that you may judge between extremes," said Mistress Delap. "William, my lad, spell for Master Byrne. First, 'enthusiasm.'"

Promptly the handsome boy responded, "E-n-t-h-u-s-i-a-s-m," in old-time style, without any syllabic pronunciation pauses.

"Now, 'phthisis.'"

The answer came instantly and correctly. Mistress Delap, overflowing with professional pride, again tested the orthography of her show pupil.

"Now, then, 'ecclesiastic,' William."

Master William Shear slipped smoothly through the third trial-word.

"Bravo!" cried Master Byrne; "that's rare spelling for a lad of five! You shall come into my class before the year's end, Master Shear."

The schoolmistress flushed proudly, as if the remark of her superior officer had been a personal compliment.

"He is a rare lad!" she cried, enthusiastically. "Now, William, listen. If you bought twenty acres of land from me at the rate of a shilling an

acre, and sold it to Master Byrne for one and seven pence an acre, how much would you gain?"

"'Leven and eight pence," replied the prodigy, with astounding rapidity.

"That will do, William; you have answered very nicely," said Mistress Delap.

"Wonderful, I call it," commented the school-master.

"Now for Stupidity. You shall see, Master Byrne, that I have my troubles for naught, sometimes. Come hither, Nolly Folly (so the lads have named him). I'll ask him a few easy questions. Now, Nolly, attention! Look straight at this gentleman, and answer me. If you bought one big apple for sixpence, and one little apple for threepence ha'penny, how much would you pay for the two?"

The ugly little boy had been surveying the fields through the opposite window, and his lacklustre eyes displayed no interest in either outdoor prospect or indoor trial. He shifted awkwardly from one foot to the other, but showed no other sign of having heard the question addressed to him.

"Come," continued the schoolmistress, sharply. "At sixpence for one and threepence ha'penny for the other, how much for two apples?"

"Too much," said Nolly, doggedly. School-master Byrne laughed, but Mistress Delap slapped

the hands of the stupid one. He glowered for a minute.

"You gived him whole lots of land for a sil-ling," he lisped, "and you gived me only two apples. I can buy apples for a ha'penny, so I can."

"It isn't apples — it is figures," explained Mistress Delap, impatiently.

"Don't yike fidders!" murmured the rebellious Nolly.

"I must try you again," said his teacher, with an air of hopeless resignation. "You heard Master Shear spell a five-syllabled word. I'll give you a word of but one syllable. Spell 'knife.'"

Nolly looked terror-stricken.

"N-i-" he began, hesitatingly.

A sharp "No!" stopped him short. Even the kindly faced schoolmaster was frowning, while the scowl of Mistress Delap was intensified. The stupid little rebel rebelled once more.

"F-o-r-k," he said.

Master Byrne was obliged to smile again, but at the same time he shook his head.

"My boy, don't you know what that spells?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," replied the culprit, calmly. "But her never asks me spell 'fork.'"

The schoolmistress nodded gravely to the

master as she said: "You see: I tell you he hath a wooden head!"

"Will you permit me to ask them a few questions?" said the schoolmaster.

"I feel honored by your request, Master Byrne," replied Mistress Delap, with the exaggerated air of old-fashioned courtesy.

Master Byrne bowed.

"Now, my clever fellow," said he, addressing William Shear, "answer me this: What is the moon?"

The schoolmistress interfered hastily.

"He hath learned nothing of that!" she cried.

"I know," said Master Byrne, tranquilly; "I know it is no part of his school studies; I wish to discover his impressions on a subject of which he has been taught nothing."

"He can have no ideas without knowledge: the mind is empty until it has been stored with facts," argued the flustered dame.

"Education isn't brains, my good Mistress Delap."

"Education trains the brain to act properly, sir."

"Just so; but the brain should be educating itself all the while; natural intelligence precedes artificial instruction; the sky and the fields, the birds and the leaves, the stones and the waters, are mighty teachers to aid that tireless instructor

— the wondering heart of a little child. The best we can do is to help nature.”

This was a little beyond the rules of eighteenth century pedagogy; Mistress Delap considered it gravely at first, and, not comprehending, condemned. Her prim little face showed something very like contempt for the notions of the hitherto revered schoolmaster, as she ended the discussion with a curt, “As you please to believe, sir!” Meantime Master Byrne went on:

“Tell me what you know about the moon, Master Shear.”

That young gentleman looked bewildered; the examination was a little out of his line.

“Sir, I know naught about the moon,” he faltered.

“Well, what do you think about it?”

“I think ’tis very bright.”

“Good. What else?”

“And it looks cold.”

“Yes.”

“And a far long way off.”

“Very good, Master Shear!”

Mistress Delap cheered up again, and began to be interested when she saw that her star scholar had acquitted himself creditably.

“And you, Master Nolly, what do you think about the moon?” said Master Byrne, turning to the stupid little lisper.

The dull eyes brightened perceptibly.

“ I fink a moon is nice,” he said, slowly. And then, with sudden volubility: “ Oh, ’tis a pretty, pretty moon, but it mates me try when I look at it, and see it looking at me. ’Way up there it sees all the big world and everybody in it, and it looks down and mates the world so pretty yike a silver world. And all the little clouds mate room for it in heaven, and all the stars point to it when I look up. It’s God’s big lamp, so it is, and He lights it up every night ’cept some nights it gets put out so we’ll be glad to see it again, and — ”

“ Nonsense! ” cried Mistress Delap. “ Is he not a veritable blockhead, Master Byrne? ”

The little Irish schoolmaster smiled enigmatically.

“ We must find out what sort of timber is in this block,” he said, placing his hand gently on the unkempt head of poor Nolly.

CHAPTER IV.

NOLLY'S GIFT

IN course of time both boys passed out of the dame-school and into the "village academy," conducted by Master Byrne. As they grew to big-boyhood there was no change in their relative positions; William Shear was ever the star and poor Nolly the dunce of the school. And yet Master Byrne was kind, even friendly, to the wearer of the dunce-cap. Nolly's homeward way ran by the schoolmaster's house, and teacher and pupil frequently walked together.

Undoubtedly there was some bond of sympathy between them. Master Byrne was very fond of poetry. The craze about Pope was then at white heat. That author had written his masterpieces, and he was still writing in the light of the fame which glorified his days, for, unlike many other poets, the bard of Twickenham was immortalized during his lifetime. The little schoolmaster was the proud and happy possessor of a "Complete Pope." Any one may have that pleasure nowa-

days for a very few pennies, but in 1736 Pope's books were a matter of guineas.

With a volume of his favorite author tucked under his arm, and anticipation beaming from his eyes, Master Byrne, accompanied by his slowest pupil, was wont to leave the school to seek the shade of a certain hedge-tree. There the little schoolmaster would read without fear of interruption, and with the added enjoyment of having an appreciative listener. Nolly, crouched on the ground, drank in every syllable of the rhythmic measures. Sometimes the master read the "Essay on Man," sometimes the "Pastorals," but more often he declaimed the old, old story of Ilium in the polished verse of the great English metrician.

It was suspected that Master Byrne had tried to make verses himself, but, truly, this could not be proven unless Nolly would tell, and a telltale he was not, although a dunce he might be. Poor Nolly! He was painfully alive to his own deficiencies. Once, when the daily reading was finished, and master and pupil were trudging home, Nolly said:

"Is't not strange that Master Pope should have written the 'Dunciad' in the very year this dunce was born?"

"Oh, but there's no fear that you'll stay a dunce, Nolly," the warm-hearted little Irishman

made haste to assure him. "You are slow, yes — but you have feeling — and a dunce, a real dunce, lad, has no intellectual feeling."

Nolly was silent for awhile, but his ugly face was darkening with one of the basest of human resentments. Presently he spoke, and his voice was half-prisoned with rage, and grating through the bars of restraint: "There is William Shear; he has all good gifts, and I — I have none."

Master Byrne was shocked at this unexpected exhibition of envy. He was about to remonstrate, when the unhappy boy, giving way to the full force of his bitter temper, trembled with fury.

"He is rich; I am poor. He is handsome; I am hideous. He is gifted; I am a dunce. He is a mannerly, graceful young gentleman; I am an awkward fool. He has everything — more than everything; I have nothing — less than nothing. 'Twere better be dead!"

The short, sharp sentences came like gasps. The transformed Nolly threw himself in the wayside grass, and burying his face, sobbed out his misery. Silently the schoolmaster sat down beside his pupil. Poor Nolly! Master Byrne had never once suspected this defect in his temper. A slow brain, a wayward heart — what a combination! And yet —

Nolly rose tremblingly, his face ghastly. "Wait, wait for me, master," he stammered. And then, with a bound, he was over the hedge. The schoolmaster heard the splashing of water, and he knew that the boy was bathing his face in the brook. Nolly's scarred face was still pale when he rejoined his friend, but his temper was subdued, and he looked ashamed. "Master, I am sorry —" he began, and hesitated.

"Is't often so with you, lad?"

"Ay, master, too often. It is worse since the smallpox seized me last Michaelmas and made my poor face more unsightly. Often and often I do lay awake at night, tortured with my thoughts, and wondering why it should be that life is so hard for me, and so easy for — for others. I am a clod of earth fit to be under a gentleman's foot, I who would be —"

He was choking again, and Master Byrne, fearing another outburst, bade him sit down on a mossy bank. The schoolmaster, standing, removed his hat, "Blessed be God for this beautiful world!" he said, with deep and joyous reverence. Nolly raised his burning eyes. It was a charming spring day, and the hour was the golden crown of the late afternoon. Sky and field revelled in a feast of delicate coloring; thousands of blossoms poured fragrance on the breeze; silvery

bird-notes floated from the happy little nest-builders; bird and bee and butterfly flashed by and vanished in the fluttering leaves, — all was light and love and color and music and perfume and motion of joy irrepressible, inexpressible. The master watched the boy's face. The too tender eyes filled with tears of very rapture, — one could almost see the envious discontent melting away in the beauty-flooded soul.

“ You are right, master, you are always right. Oh, yes, blessed be God! ” So soft and low, who could have known that voice as the one of rancorous harshness, the only discord in the air so short a while ago? Now was the time for the wise friend's little preachment.

“ God knows what is best and does what is best. A clod of earth, say you? The clod brings forth grass to feed the cattle, and flowers to feed the bees, and it contrives to add to the beauty of the world as well. If a blade of grass has its work to do in the universe, what is the work of a man created in the image and likeness of the Creator? He who gave to the meanest weed its mission did not make one of His noblest creatures in vain. . . . What does Master Pope say? Ay, truly, an honest man is the noblest work of God.

“ ‘ Some are, and must be, greater than the rest,
More rich, more wise; but who infers from hence
That such are happier? ’ ”

“Our gifts may be distributed unequally, but whoso says any gift is useless is ignorant of the ways of the great Giver. Look you, lad, a wren cannot bear a man upon his back, and the great elephant has not the skill to build the little nest of the wren. The master puts it better: see where he says, —

“‘Honor and shame from no condition rise,
Act well your part: there all the honor lies.’

“My poor Nolly, look without when all seems dark within; look, as Master Pope hath it, look through Nature up to Nature’s God!”

A week later, William Shear set out early in the morning to walk to school, and the groom, grumbling at the sudden whim of his young master, led the boy’s pony back to the stable. It was a perfect May morning; the white hawthorn was in flower, and the air was like freshly distilled perfume. William, strolling leisurely along, sniffed the fragrance with keen enjoyment. He glanced to the right and the left, and saw the broad meadows, and the little cultivated holdings, and the wooded park reserve. All these wide acres were to be his, and his alone; every cottage within view held a tenant of his father’s estate; the very schoolhouse belonged to his fair demesnes. His enjoyment of the May morn was not unmingled with a gratifying sense of pro-

prietorship. He halted at the hawthorn-bush. There sat Nolly, his rough head and awkward shoulders bent over a piece of slate upon which he was scribbling.

"Doing your sums?" asked William the Great, quite affably.

"No," said Nolly. "I hate figures; I can make no hand of them." Then, gravely:

"I'm writing poetry."

"Oh!" gasped the star scholar, doubtful whether to laugh or to scold. But he took the proffered slate and read:

"MY WORLD.

"The hawthorne blossomes in the month of May;
The fieldes are greene; the sky is blue to-day;
And I am ritch. I share this beauteous view,
'Tis seen from cassell and from cotage, too.
I am the heir of Time. The world's best dress
Is don'd to pleze me. I am plezed. I press
My thankfull face upon the plezant earth.
Nor witt, nor grace nor fortune give me worth,—
And yet am I the lord of all I see,
If none will share my heritage with me."

"I vow," declared William, "this is vile spelling for a great boy of nine!"

"My mother says that nine is but young in years," said poor Nolly. "She will have it that great learning cannot be swallowed by little children."

"Your mother is a simple woman," retorted

Master William. "My father told me but yester-e'en, that he knew his Virgil and Cæsar as well at nine years as he knows them to-day."

Which probably was true.

"Hey, lads!" broke in the cheery voice of the schoolmaster. "Not so much time for loitering this morning!" As he spoke he joined them. William handed him the piece of slate, smiling as he did so.

Master Byrne read the lines slowly; then he fixed his eyes on Nolly's blushing homeliness.

"Lad," he said, solemnly, "truly, truly you have a gift of numbers. The verse is written in Mr. Pope's favorite measure."

William Shear stared at the little schoolmaster as if he thought him suddenly crazed.

"But the spelling!" he cried.

"Ay, the spelling," glancing over the slate once more. "He improves in the spelling."

"Is there a word properly spelled?"

"Ay, and many. He will learn, William. Now here's 'view' correctly written, and 'heritage' — hard words, both of them."

"I can spell any word."

"So you can, William, so you can, and a fine scholar you are — truly a credit to the school. And yet, my boy, were you to try from now to doomsday you could not write these lines of Noll's. Learning is acquired, gifts are inborn,

And, in verity, I think that our poor Nolly hath discovered the possession of a gift at last."

Again he read the verse.

"The rhythm is smooth," he said, "and the sentiment is good, very good."

Nolly Folly bowed in his best manner, which was a very clumsy manner, indeed.

"Sir, for the rhythm I must thank Master Pope, whose gracious lines you have so often read to me. I could not help counting his numbers even as I wrote. And, oh, sir! am I not indebted to you for the sentiment? How could I forget your kind and beautiful words?"

This was a long speech for Nolly, but he jerked it out somehow, and the little Irish school-master laid his hand on the tousled head almost as if he loved the boy.

William Shear looked on approvingly. Nolly spoke the bare truth when he said that the young heir had all good gifts. He was as bright of heart as of mind; to him jealousy was as foreign as stupidity. He liked Nolly in a way that was half-pitying, half-contemptuous, as it became the only son of an estated gentleman to regard a boy who divided an inheritance of poverty with a small army of brothers and sisters; a boy, too, who lacked attractive qualities, who was slow-witted, graceless, destructively careless, and ugly

to the point of repulsion. The feeling which the schoolmaster had discerned saved the hapless Nolly from compelling the dislike of his schoolmates. They all liked him, even while they wondered why they did so.

CHAPTER V.

NOLLY IN SOCIETY

AFTER the little scene under the hawthorn-bush, Master William lost his contempt for the hero of the dunce-stool, and went even so far as to invite him to his birthday party. This was a great event, and the wealthy parents spared no expense to make it a memorable occasion. Dancing was to be one of the features of the evening's entertainment, and Schoolmaster Byrne, a man of various accomplishments, taught Nolly a few steps after school hours. The boy's clothes were shabby to the verge of raggedness; despite his mother's neat mending, his only coat was visibly a thing of shreds and patches. At the last moment he decided to wear the coat of his elder brother. It was a whole garment, and the fact that it was much too large for him did not trouble Nolly Folly until after his arrival at the great house, where the festivities had already begun.

It was a period of boundless extravagance in

dress, and the little gentlemen present were shining examples of the prevailing fashion. The handsome young host looked princely indeed in silver-broidered white satin. His lace was the most filmy Point Bruxelles, and the diamond buckles on his high-heeled slippers were a little fortune in themselves. The other guests were attired with corresponding splendor. Lustrous satins of every conceivable hue blent with the glinting of gold and silver lace upon the aristocratic little dancers. Beautiful little girls moved hither and thither as lightly as fairies, miniature grand dames with powdered tresses, and jewelled chains, and French fans expressively swayed. Nolly felt dismally out of place; he wished for the power to fly that he might escape through one of the high windows.

The Honorable Mrs. Shear stared at the uncouth figure across the room. "My son," she said, sharply, "who is yonder fellow? Can you conceive how he managed to get admitted?"

William Shear bit his lip as he took in the details of poor Nolly's mongrel costume. The old-time bottle-green, long-tailed coat dangled loosely over the homespun blue breeches and madder-dyed red flannel waistcoat. The hob-nailed hide shoes were soiled with the mud of the road, the coarse gray knit stockings were the

only home-made hosiery in that silk-legged, carriage-conveyed assembly.

“Why didn’t he dress?” thought William, irritably. And then, aloud: “He’s a schoolmate of mine, mother —”

“I have always set my face against your going to the village school. This is the sort of society you have, is it? But why have you brought the peasant here?” The honorable madam was thoroughly angry.

“Oh, he’s no peasant, madam. He is poor, yes, but his father is the queer curate, you know. They give all their little means away to the beggars, and they have a large family to provide for. Nolly is very odd, too, but the master says he is cut out for a poet.”

“Ah, I see,” commented the woman of the world. “What do you think of that odd child over there, my dear?” addressing a languid little lady near by, the daughter of an Irish peer.

“A’m sure Ah can’t say,” drawled Lady Una.

“Yes, you are right, my love; it is hard to say what one thinks of a figure like that. Fancy, he is the clergyman’s son; fine old family they are — connected with the Contarines and the Cecils and all manner of good people. The uncle is the bosom friend of Bishop Berkeley; they might be what they choose, and they choose to bury

themselves in poverty in our village. William tells me that they give their means away to the beggars — think of that!”

Little Lady Una looked interested, for a wonder.

“The boy is like a beggar-boy himself, madam. Why, he looks as if he were clad from a rag-bag.”

“Oh, dear, that’s a clever idea of his: he came in a character costume.” The insincere fine lady looked around to make sure that her son had gone out of hearing before she made this equivocal statement. “The boy is a second Pope, my dear — Pope the poet, you know, not Pope the Pope.”

Lady Una smiled. “He does not look Papal, madam. How deliciously ugly he is! There’s William greeting him now — what a contrast!”

William did not permit himself to show the slightest chagrin at the unseemly appearance of his guest, although he must have wished to say with Tranio, —

“Go to my chamber; put on clothes of mine!”

He greeted Nolly affectionately, and led him to an old lady, who gave him cake and tea. By and by a cousin of William’s, a lad of twelve, began to play the violin. It was not yet the

fashion to have orchestral music at private entertainments. The first dance was a hornpipe — the very step poor Noll had learned. The near-sighted old lady spoke to him.

“Don’t you dance?” she said.

“Y-yes, ma’am,” faltered Nolly.

“Then get up and dance. It’s a hornpipe; you need wait for no partner. Dance, child, and enjoy yourself. That’s what you’re here for.”

Nolly obeyed reluctantly. The dance was lively and the music spirited. Quite forgetting the singularity of his dress, the boy was absorbed in the practice of his newly learned accomplishment, when suddenly he noticed that most of the other dancers had stopped to watch him. Master Byrne had instructed him not to pause until the music stopped, and Nolly resolutely persevered.

So the gawky figure became the central attraction. Noll did not dance out of step, but he was naturally clumsy, and his ridiculous attire and marked ugliness turned him into the clown of the occasion. Truth to say, William’s party, thanks to his mother’s management, was so formally fashionable that the young people were glad to welcome a diversion.

The young violinist helped the fun. He played away with right good-will, interspersing his notes with affected compliments which convulsed the polite company. There were no ha-ha-has, but

smiles were not concealed. Finding that the dancer was the only one who paid no attention to his wit, the young musician went a bit farther.

“Very graceful dancing, ve-ry graceful, my little Æsop!” he cried.

This cruel allusion to his personal appearance stopped the awkward dancer. He recollected having read somewhere of Æsop as having been a very monster of deformed ugliness. Nolly’s eyes blazed; he forgot everything but the insult, and its sharpness spurred his slow wit. Pointing at the would-be humorist, he exclaimed:

“Our herald hath proclaimed this saying,
See Æsop dancing and his monkey playing!”

The next moment Nolly’s rough hand was clasped by little velvet-soft fingers, and he was dimly aware that a beautiful vision was speaking to him, as William Shear, indignant, flushed, but resolutely self-possessed, presented him to Lady Una.

“I am glad to know you, vastly glad,” said the little lady. “You are a wit, I perceive, as well as a poet.” She had darted across the room, flinging a lightning glance of anger upon the luckless violinist as she passed. The Honorable Mrs. Shear followed with the slowness befitting dignity. She was quite gracious.

“We hope to hear great things of you in

time," she said, nodding affably, her absurd crown of feathers quivering with every movement of her head. "I have told Lady Una that you are to be the Pope of Ireland. It's in your blood, you know — to be somebody, I mean."

During the fine lady's vague speech her son had withdrawn from the group to seek the insulter of poor Nolly. The young gentleman was enjoying a little triumph of his own, still making merry at the expense of "the Pope of Ireland," and rewarded by the polite tittering of a few favored friends, when William interrupted him.

"This may not pass, Cousin Arthur," he said, firmly. "You must apologize to my guest — my friend."

"To that —"

"To that young gentleman, yes." William turned his eyes to the others. "There are two things a gentleman may do in a case like this," he went on. "He may speak handsomely to the offended one, or he may —"

"Fight!" cried the boys in unison. Only — only they did not say it as boys do. These were premature little men, pocket edition beaux of the period. People talk of the precocity of children to-day; rest assured it is mere babyishness in comparison with the ideas and manners of those who were young when George the Second was king.

One drew his little sword; another snapped his fingers, which meant that, having no sword, he was for pistols, while a third pulled out a silver snuff-box, and put a pinch of the brown powder to his little nose, the while he looked very knowing.

“Gentlemen do not fight for trifles,” declared this twelve-year old arbiter. “If it is a question of a lady’s honor or a man’s courage, a duel’s the thing. But we must not draw for nothing, like rowdies in a tavern!”

“Molyneux is right,” said Arthur. Molyneux was always right; how could a viscount be in the wrong? The little nobleman took another tiny pinch of snuff as the offender marched off to laugh away his “joke” to the offended. Poor Nolly was bewildered with attentions; he begged the gay apologist to play again, and while the dancers were ranging themselves for a minuet, he bade a blundering farewell to his hostess and slipped away through the great hall door and between the rows of carriages and sedan-chairs on the driveway, a target for the second-hand witticisms of the waiting flunkies.

He attended no more parties. Very soon afterward he left Lissoy to live with his uncle in the adjoining county. Under the care of this relative, the scholarly Contarine, he pursued his studies with little more success than had crowned

his efforts in the village school. He missed Schoolmaster Byrne sorely, and the little master, for his part, would gladly have exchanged the aptest of his pupils for poor Nolly, the loving and lovable dunce. It was not to be. Nolly and his old master had parted for ever.

CHAPTER VI.

NOLLY IN THE WORLD

WITH every succeeding year Master William Shear grew wiser and more comely. When his parents died of smallpox he escaped contagion, although in those days, before the preventive virtues of vaccination had been discovered, whole families were wiped out by the dread disease. His father and mother were buried together on the day of their death. After the double funeral, his English grandfather sent for the orphaned boy. Sir Roger Vivian, the father of the Honorable Mrs. Shear, was very proud of the appearance and talents of his Irish grandson, who was the envy of the English heirs. In good time, William passed from Eton to Oxford, where he distinguished himself and his college.

When Sir Roger died and young Roger succeeded to the title and estate, William Shear returned to Ireland in time for the wedding of Lady Una and Lord Molyneux. At this festivity he lost his heart to Lady Ethne, the bride's

younger sister, and, in course of time, this fair young girl became the Lady Ethne Shear.

William settled down in his Lissoy estate, and — almost — got into Parliament. His opponent, an Irishman with a quick wit and a silvery tongue, managed to secure a small majority of the votes, and the defeated candidate cheerfully returned to his books. To the end of his days William Shear was known as a man of deep and varied erudition. A work on “Comparative Philology,” bearing his name on its title-page, is evidence that he wrote a book — the first edition of which has never been exhausted. To his heirs he left much money and wide lands, and, among other valued personal possessions, a scrap of paper covered with the irregular writing of — Nolly Folly!

A very stately and beautiful grand dame was Una, Lady Molyneux, poor Nolly’s aristocratic little champion of long ago. When the viscount succeeded to the earldom of Sefton, the young countess, then at the full flower of her bloom, was said to be the most beautiful woman in the “three kingdoms.” At the close of her first season in London society, the king himself deigned to express an opinion of her charms. “Der Eirish gountess iss too britty und too — berfect,” declared royal George. Following the lead of his Hanoverian Britannic Majesty, the

gentlemen of the court hastened to say that the cold manners of the countess were enough to mar her superb beauty. The many ladies who were neither too britty nor too berfect were as one in pronouncing the Countess of Sefton uninteresting, languid, and vastly insipid. When these remarks were repeated to Sir Joshua Reynolds, he laughed. Indeed, the Reynolds portrait of her ladyship shows a peerless beauty with the expression of an angel.

“ Perhaps I flattered the Irish countess a bit,” said the great painter one day, simply to “ draw out ” Nolly.

“ There is neither color nor brush in this world to do her justice,” retorted poor Nolly. “ She flatters all art when she consents to be portrayed by you ! ”

So he must have seen her, though she never once saw him, try as she might. Once, indeed, he was a beggar in the street when he watched her carriage go by ; once, but that was later, he saw her in the theatre when his play had failed — poor Nolly ! — and she and her lord applauded with his friends, in vain endeavor to stem the tide of hissing. Oh, she knew of him through his work ! and that was enough for him ; he would never intrude his ugly face into her charmed circle.

After that first season the countess was seldom

in London; she had what his Majesty called the "gweer taste" to prefer her Irish castle to a house in the metropolis with all the advantages of a very corrupt society. She was a queen to her children and a mother to her tenants. And by and by, when that marvellous beauty of hers had become a withered "rose of yesterday," a mere memory of the past, and her grandchildren clustered around her, she had many stories to tell them of her own childhood. One tale ended in this wise:

"Here is the hand that clasped his hand. I am so glad to think of it. But it was very amusing, children, when Madam Shear — that was your great-grandaunt — followed me, and saw me shaking hands with poor Nolly. Afterward, she told me that she was horrified. 'You should have waited until he came up to be presented to you, and then you should have curtsied very distantly, instead of shaking hands like a — like a — like an American emigrant!' Ah, we were very formal in those days, my dears!"

If I had time, it would give me pleasure to tell you the whole life-story of Schoolmaster Byrne. If you have not guessed that he was a most unusual kind of pedagogue, I have told you nothing. He had fought under the great Marlborough, and had travelled much, though to small purpose, before he began to teach the little

school in his native county. An obscure little old school; a queer little old teacher! Yet both are immortalized in the "Deserted Village," —

"There in his noisy mansion, skilled to rule,
The village master taught his little school."

Mistress Elizabeth Delap, the dame of the dame-school, lived to be ninety. In her later years she became something of a celebrated character, since men travelled long distances to see her that she might show them Nolly's horn-book and primer, which she seemed to have preserved as mementos of her most stupid scholar. She found it hard to credit her little dunce's fame. "Nolly Folly always was, and always must have been, a very wooden-head!" she maintained, stubbornly.

Poor Nolly! Yes, he grew up, uglier and more careless as the years went by. He gained a little money, and lost a great deal. He blundered through his short life in an unhappy manner, a poor student, an indifferent doctor, a vagrant tutor, a desultory writer, — sometimes playing philosopher, oftener playing fool. He was a financial failure. He died in great poverty, but he was mourned by many friends, and profound thinkers placed his name above that of Pope, his great master of numbers. King George the Third made him a professor of the Royal

Academy, — a position too “honorable” to carry any salary with it, — and Nolly remarked to Garrick that the distinction conferred on him was like presenting bosom-ruffles to a man who lacked a shirt.

A very good friend of his was “the great Cham” of English literature, Dr. Samuel Johnson. Edmund Burke, David Garrick, and Sir Joshua Reynolds fondly loved poor Nolly. It was of him that Garrick said, “He wrote like an angel, and talked like — poor Poll.”

“Let not his frailties be remembered,” said Johnson; “he was a very great man!”

Poor Nolly was Oliver Goldsmith.

The Student smiled at me, for when I said “O-oh!” my eyes were o’s, as Nana might have said. But Frank was scornful. “Poor Nolly, indeed! That fellow was a regular chump!”

“Oh, yes, you’d rather have been William Shear, I suppose! Well, I wouldn’t; — I’d rather be the author of the ‘Vicar of Wakefield’ and the ‘Deserted Village’ than be King of England!”

“But he was a — what does Frank call him? — a ‘chump,’ in some things, you know. It isn’t safe to judge by externals, however. Why don’t you get Nana to tell you about Tad the Fool?”

“Sure you can tell that tale yourself, and tell it better than any one else,” said Nana.

“Do, please!” pleaded Frank, ever hungry for a new story.

“But it’s about some one else no more promising than the class dunce,” said the Student, slyly.

“Well, there may be something even in him, after all,” admitted Master Frank. “Pshaw! there’s Grandpapa on the verandah looking for you. When will you tell us the story of Tad the Fool?”

“Perhaps to-morrow,” promised the Student, taking his Arabic book, and rising to join Grandpapa.

But Grandpapa took him to Washington the next day, and it was a whole week before we heard the story told in the next chapter.

CHAPTER VII.

TAD, THE FOOL

IN Irish, Scandinavian, and Russian folk-lore, many stories centre upon the funny exploits of fool heroes. Simple Simon is not always a laughing-stock, however; although he creates merriment enough, frequently he comes out ahead of the pieman.

Within the shadow of the Galtee Mountains of Ireland, between Cahir and Tipperary town, dwelt one of the unsophisticated tribe, who was known in the little village as "Tad, the Fool." Thaddeus was the last of thirteen children, and his mother was a widow. A tradition handed down in Ballyvalley has it that Tad "slept in the ashes for seven long years" and then, waking up hungry, called for a bowl of porridge, to the astonishment of his old mother, who had never hoped to be able to arouse him.

It is quite certain that he kept almost absolute silence for a long period, and if, in popular esteem, silence isn't the mark of a fool or a

genius, I'd like to know what is! One day, however, he left off his mantle of taciturnity, and began to ask questions enough to bewilder a philosopher, let alone a poor Irish widow. After the first query his mother stared at him.

"I thought it was half-dumb you were," she said. "What are you after asking me, Tad, alanna?"

"Tadalanna," repeated the boy, musingly; "it's a fine long name I have, anyhow. Well, I'm after asking you if I haven't any brothers and sisters at all?"

"You have, alanna, and twelve of them. There's Patrick and Mary Ann, and Michael and Bridget, and Brian and Katie, and Larry and Liza, and John and Norry, and Martin and Peggy."

She stopped, quite out of breath.

"And there's me," said Tad.

"Yes, there's you," agreed his mother, dolefully; "you were the thirteenth, the odd one entirely, and your father to die and me to be left a poor widow woman, and all my children to leave me but the foolish one!"

"Who's the foolish one?" asked Tad.

"Who but you?" retorted the widow; "who but a natural fool would be as dumb as a tombstone for a long stretch, and then begin to ask a whole catechism of questions at once?"

"I'm not done asking yet," Tad warned her; "I'd like to know if I haven't any sister?"

"And after I telling you that there's six — Bridget and Mary and Norry and Kate and Liza and Peggy!"

"Ah, but there's six brothers for them. Every brother has a sister but me. I'm the odd one."

"Troth, and you are that, not to know that every brother and every sister belongs to yourself. But if you want a sister there's Liza, the only one of my children left in Ireland, save Larry in the churchyard beyond."

"Is my brother Larry under the stones?"

"He is in heaven," said Mrs. Mahon. "He went in all his innocence, a little fair-haired gossoon of six. It's twenty years since we laid him down," the old woman went on, with a tremor in her voice, "and I thought his father would die of grief; 'twas the only one we lost, and now the one stone is over father and son. Ah, Tad," she concluded, wiping her eyes, "if 'twas God's will, 'twould be better for you to be with them, my poor innocent."

Tad went outside the door and returned with a spade.

"Good-by," he said; "I'm going."

"Going where, alanna?"

"I'll dig up the ground and go to dada and Larry."

Mrs. Mahon took the spade away from him.

"No," she said, "you must live till God calls you. If you only had a little more sense — sure there wasn't one of my children but were full of cutting but you. I don't know where you got your softness."

"I heard Nance Foley say that my grandfather was a bit daft."

"Your grandfather, they said, was a miser and had a chest of gold. But sorra bit could they find when he died. So they said his head was queer. But people will talk while they have tongues. And it's small wonder they talk of you, Tad. I heard the other day that some one killed one of Sir Charles's hounds, and Nance herself told me she thought she saw you coming out of the wood."

"I'm sorry I killed a dog," said the boy. "I saw the poor hare looking at me for help, and I threw a big stone at the hound. The hare got away and I was glad."

"But you spoiled the sport of the gentlemen, and you killed a valuable dog that I'll have to pay for now."

"If they call it sport to hunt down a poor little beast with dogs and horses, they're more fools than I am."

"Tad," said Mrs. Mahon, "you don't see

things right. I'll send you to school to Mr. Boyle."

She was as good as her word, and the very next week found the boy with a number of lads in the village school, where "Tad, the Fool," speedily became the butt for all the petty shafts which the senders were pleased to call sallies of wit. Tad's preternaturally grave manner and his absolute simplicity and directness were comical at times. A keen observer might have said that he had more "cutting" than his mother gave him credit for. But he was a queer object. His hair was long, and he wore the most nondescript garments imaginable. "Clothes are only covers," said Tad, the Fool; "and I'm covered, at any rate."

He made some progress in reading, writing, and catechism at Ballyvalley school; but Mr. Boyle said he had no head for figures. The presiding genius of the school was a wrinkled, little, old-fashioned Irishman, with a marvellous capacity for "figures," and for nothing else. The instructive instinct he lacked altogether, and his manner of teaching was cumbersome and utterly uninteresting.

When Tad had been at school for more than a year, Mrs. Mahon ventured to ask the man of knowledge how her son was getting on.

Mr. Boyle shook his head impressively.

"No perception, madam," he said, firmly. "I assure you that he doesn't know the difference between a parallelopipedon and a parabola!"

The widow was staggered with "the ponderosity of the verbosity."

"They must be hard things," she said; "maybe he'll learn?"

"Maybe;" repeated the pedant, doubtfully; "geometrical propositions, necessarily axiomatic, are frequently attended with a degree of incomprehensibility, almost, I might say, unintelligible to immature minds. But algebra, madam, algebra, is the most beautifully lucid of the great mathematical sciences. Your son, Mrs. Mahon," he concluded, coming down from his verbal mountains, "your son cannot be made to understand x and y ."

"Oh, then," said Tad's mother, "if that's the case, there's no hope for him at all, at all," and she departed in great sorrow.

"Tad," she said to him, when she reached home, "you needn't go to school any more, alanna. The master says you didn't even learn x and y , and you fifteen months at school! And my little Larry that was taken from me in his innocence could say his letters backward when he was five. And you're fourteen, Tad."

"I am," said Tad, "and I was out of my letters

when I was at school a week. I'm in words of three syl-la-bles now," he declared, slowly.

"He said you didn't know x and y."

"He means," explained the boy, patiently, "that I don't know all about al-geb-ra. But the other boys can't make it out so easy, either."

"And he said you had no per-ception."

"I can't help that," said Tad. "Maybe you could buy some for me, mother?"

"I don't know," hesitated Mrs. Mahon; "the reading-book and the copy-book didn't cost a great deal, but this perception might be a dear thing."

"If you like, mother, I'll not go any more. If being a scholar would make me like old Paddy Boyle, I'd rather stay an ig-nor-a-mus."

"Is that what you are?" asked the simple woman. "Well, alanna, do as you like. If you can't take learning, it's no fault of yours."

So Tad left school and began to roam about again. He knew every hill and valley in the vicinity of the village, and he was known as a "natural," whose especial folly was an infinite degree of "softness." He was tender to every living thing, and children and dumb animals loved him surpassingly well.

"He would stare for hours at a few green leaves or blades of grass," said one of his contemporaries, "and though he would kill nothing

he'd gather up all the dead flies and moths. I don't know what he did with them, but 'twas likely he thought they ought to be buried like Christians. He was such a fool!"

One day a great doctor from Dublin came to the village. He had been sent for by Sir Charles Morley, the local magnate, whose estate lay just outside Ballyvalley. Lady Morley was ill with pneumonia, and the local physician was as eager as Sir Charles himself to have the advice of the Great Harkaway. Mrs. Mahon, who had been her Ladyship's nurse thirty years before, hurried to the Hall like the faithful old soul that she was, when she heard that her former charge was in danger. Useless enough she was, too, but no one told her so, for with that spirit so seldom seen between classes in America, the master of Morley Hall understood and appreciated the old servant's devotion.

It was thus that Tad's mother met the famous Doctor Harkaway, who was afterwards knighted for his services to the royal family. In the servants' hall his powers were viewed through the telescope of mystery, and thereby greatly magnified. The laundress declared that a man who had had his brains blown out was fixed up properly by Doctor Harkaway.

"The very man is living to-day in County Cork," she said, "and his forehead bulges out

where the doctor stuffed it with cotton rags before he sewed it up."

"I don't see how a man could live with rags for brains," argued the scullery-maid.

"Ah, but you see this man is in the rag business!" concluded the laundress, convincingly.

Mrs. Mahon listened in amazement. Her thoughts worked rapidly. Poor Tad! What if the doctor could fix his head? Rags; she didn't know about that; the rag business wasn't what a son of Terence Mahon should go into, — Terence, her dead husband, who had been a "bit of a scholar," and who, like his father before him, had sailed the foreign seas. Her other children were prospering in England and America, and they were all in a "respectable way." Rags wouldn't do. Still, there might be something else. Perception, now! That's what old Boyle said the boy required. If Doctor Harkaway could stuff his head with this unknown material, Tad would understand "all the parables of Boyle," thought Mrs. Mahon. So she waylaid the great man coming down the grand stairway, and laid the case before him.

"If you could get some perception for him, please, sir, I'd be willing to pay for as much as he'll want," she said, by way of conclusion.

The Great Harkaway eyed her in quizzical patience.

"Perception?" he repeated, interrogatively.

"Yes, your Honor. That's what the school-master said he lacked. And I can pay you a guinea, for my sons in America are very good to me."

He smiled. "Never mind your guinea," he said. "If the boy were here I might examine him. My time is precious, and I must drive over to Cahir to get the noon train. Is your son idiotic?"

"He was at school a year, your Honor, and the master said he couldn't tell a from b."

In her excitement Mrs. Mahon gave the wrong letters.

The doctor looked grave.

"I fear we can do nothing with him," he said. "Where is he?"

"He's down-stairs, please, sir." She led the way to the kitchen, where Tad sat listening to the innocent gossip of the cook.

"Leave us alone, if you please," said the doctor, and Mrs. Mahon and the kitchen officials left the room.

The widow waited in some suspense for the verdict. In ten minutes Dr. Harkaway came out, drawing on his gloves and smiling broadly.

"Can you do anything for him?" asked the

anxious mother. "I could send him to Dublin, sir, where you could treat him at your office. His sister Liza lives in Dublin and he could stay with her."

"Send him to Dublin, then, by all means," said the doctor. "I should say he needs change."

He was still smiling.

"And — and," ventured Mrs. Mahon, timidly, "do you think he'll ever be like the rest of us?"

"Well, no," replied the physician, with suspiciously sudden gravity. "I don't say he'll ever be quite so wise as all that!"

And then he laughed aloud.

"But send him — send him to town. Ballyvalley doesn't understand his case."

And he went off with the same odd smile.

"A pleasant-spoken old gentleman," said Mrs. Mahon, approvingly, to the laundress; "smiling away as if I'd given him fifty pounds for his services."

Just then Tad came out.

"Is it going to sell me you are, mother?" he asked, reproachfully.

The question startled her. "Sell you!" she repeated after him. "What put such a whim into your poor head, alanna?"

"The man with the beard," said Tad. "He felt all over my head with his two big hands, and he brought me to the window and stared into

my eyes, and he pushed back my eyelids, and he asked my name and how old I was."

"And you told him civilly?"

"I did that, and then I asked his name and his age."

"Oh, but that wasn't civil at all, at all," cried Mrs. Mahon. "What concern of yours was it?"

"He didn't say that," said Tad, proudly. "He told me his name was Harkaway, and that he was sixty-two, and says he, 'Would you like to live to that age?' and I said yes, if living so old would make me as fine a man as him. And he laughed, and says he: 'Well, if you're a fool, you're an Irish fool!'"

"Oh, but he's the civil old gentleman!" cried the old woman, delightedly, "and wouldn't you like to see him often, Tad, and to have him see you?"

"I don't mind having him see me," replied the boy, "if he doesn't feel me so much."

"Ah, that's only for the first time," she said, soothingly; "it's looking for a thin place, he was."

"Yes, indeed," put in the laundress, "and when he finds the thin place you'll feel him."

The widow gave a little scream.

"You don't think he'd hurt him, Nance?" she queried, anxiously.

“He’d have to hurt him to cure him,” said Nance Foley, oracularly.

“Is it a doctor he is?” asked Tad the Fool, quickly.

“Yes, alanna, and I’m going to send you to Dublin to your sister Liza, where he can see you often and cure you. I’m only waiting for the next mail from America, for I’m expecting ten pounds from Patrick and Michael — God be good to them!”

CHAPTER VIII.

TAD'S FORTUNE

THE next mail brought news of "hard times" in the new world, and barely half of the customary remittance. The Widow Mahon was greatly distressed.

"I've but only enough to live on now," she said, "let alone to send you away with, Tad. My poor afflicted boy, I was sure I'd have you cured!"

"Oh, maybe I'll do as I am," Tad responded, cheerfully. "I'm too big a boy to be a drag on you, mother. I'll have to seek my fortune, too."

His mother clasped her hands in pity.

"You're not like your brothers, alanna," she said; "sure, you have no cutting, and a fortune was never made by a natural."

"Well, now, that's how the lady said I'd make mine," asserted Tad, stoutly.

"How? What lady?"

"'Twas yesterday," explained the fool, in the

slow, deliberate way that his associates termed "half-witted;" "I was coming down the big hill and I saw a car stopping at the foot. A lady and two gentlemen got out, and they went hunting about for something in the hedge. When I came I asked them what they were seeking."

"Ah, why did you speak till you were spoken to? But it's no use talking, you'd speak to the queen herself."

"I would, indeed! Why not? But the lady looked at me kindly, and one of the gentlemen laughed — at my clothes, I think — and he said: 'Oh, Paddy will find it. Paddy, my boy, can you get us a few specimens of or-kee-day-ee?'

" 'Say it again,' says I, and then the lady and the other gentleman laughed at him, but he said it again, and I told him I didn't know, and I was going away, when the lady said: 'It's a kind of a plant,' and then I asked her to tell me what it was like, and when she told me, I said the dusty roadside wasn't the place to be looking for it, and I brought her down the valley where the bit of water is, and I got her a lot of the flowers she wanted.

" 'What do you call them hereabouts?' she asked me, and I said I didn't know; that I only know them myself because I'm foolish and don't go to school. I promised to bring her to the rocks some day where there's a very queer kind

growing. You know, mother, I hung one on a nail and it grew without earth."

"That is only your nonsense," said his mother. "It kept fresh for awhile. The lady was laughing at you, too, no more than the gentleman."

"Maybe she was," said Tad, dejectedly. "She told me I might make my fortune some day as a natural — naturalist."

"Natural!" echoed Mrs. Mahon, scornfully. "Well, if she was a real lady she wouldn't be twitting a poor boy because he is a natural."

"But she said natural-ist, mother."

"It's all one. It only means a bigger natural, alanna."

"And she said that over in America, where her home is, rich ladies paid as much as a pound for a bunch of flowers like those I got for her. And she said, 'What do you call them?' And when I said I named them spider flowers because they looked like spiders, she said that's what that kind was called pop-u-larly, and she said I was observing. I was glad when she told me she was American, and I said, 'I wonder if you know my brother Patrick out there?' Then both gentlemen laughed, but she took a little book and a pencil, and she says, 'I shall be very glad to know him when I go home if you will give me his address.' But I didn't know it, mother.

You'll tell me, won't you, so's I can give it to her next week?"

"If you see her," said his mother. "I'm afraid she's a young lady that's fond of her little joke. But why didn't you tell me all this before, alanna?"

"I was thinking about it," replied the fool.

"Don't think; don't think at all," advised this wise woman; "sensible people try to stop thinking."

The young American lady came to Ballyvalley again the next week, and she readily made out the Mahon cottage. The old woman received her warily enough, in spite of the irrepressible Celtic hospitality, but Miss Knowles disarmed her suspicions of merrymaking intent, and delighted her by drinking and praising the inevitable "cup o' tay."

The visitor had brought her botanical outfit with her, and she took pains to show Tad how a grain of sugar is magnified into an immense rock of crystal. The widow, too, was interested in the "spy-glass," as she called it, although nothing could persuade her that it was more than a toy. As for Tad, he was transported with delight. He accompanied Miss Knowles to his accustomed haunts with quite a sense of proprietorship. They spent a most delightful afternoon collecting "treasures," and the boy was in the

seventh heaven of happiness. Once, indeed, he said to his companion:

"You're not doing this to humor me?"

"To humor you? No, indeed! I am humoring myself."

"And," he ventured, hesitatingly, "did you ever look at flies and things through the glass? Because, if you did, I have a lot of them. The boys think I bury them, but I don't. I like to look at them."

"An entomologist, too!" murmured Miss Knowles. "Tad, you're a genuine naturalist."

Tad the Fool looked distressed.

"I can't help it," he said, gloomily.

The young American saw his misconception instantly, recollecting that some one had told her that "natural" and "idiot" were synonymous terms in Munster.

"By naturalist," she explained, gently, "I mean a lover of nature. You would never be thought of in a lesser sense by those who could understand you, Tad. And yet —"

She paused and looked at him. Over his ragged corduroys he wore a gaily colored jacket of distinctly feminine cut, evidently a wardrobe relic of one of his six sisters. His brown hair waved down upon his shoulders, and this, with the jacket and his great eyes and slender face, gave him a most girlish appearance.

Miss Knowles lifted one of his locks half-playfully.

"Why don't you have your hair cut?" she said.

The fool glanced up at the shining blonde braids fastened to her shapely head with many little loops of golden wire.

"Why don't you cut yours?" he asked, without the least bit of impertinence in his manner.

She laughed.

"Girls and women wear their hair long," she said. "There are funny little yellow men with slanting eyes who live in a great place called China — that's where your mother's delicious tea came from — and these ugly little creatures let their braids grow long, but sensible white men and boys have their hair cut quite close."

"I know," said Tad. "They all have their hair clipped but me. And I think if the Lord wanted men to have short hair He wouldn't let it grow long. And in His picture His hair is longer than mine."

"That's a very good reason," assented Tad's new friend; "but He lived a long time ago in a far-away land when customs were altogether different. Even a hundred years ago men wore long hair, but nowadays all that is left to women and children. The world is too busy to spend time in brushing manly locks." She laughed

softly as she spoke. "Women are getting to be very busy people, too," she went on, "and in another hundred years no doubt they also will go about 'shavey-headed,' as our little Yankees say."

"I don't care much," said Tad, "but if it pleases you I'll have my hair cut off. Though I am not busy," he added, regretfully.

"Oh, you will be," Miss Knowles assured him, cheerfully. "It's a great world, and there's a little nook in it for each of us to work in, if we can find it."

Tad spent many happy hours during that summer with his American friend, and the Widow Mahon thought Miss Knowles "the most good-natured lady in the world to be bothering her head about playing with poor Tad."

But the time for her departure drew near, and it was a sad day for Tad when she came to the cottage to say farewell. Her uncle and cousin, with whom she had been travelling, offered to take the boy as far as Dublin, where they purposed to spend a week, but Tad, to his mother's surprise, refused to go, nor would he accept the sovereign which the elder gentleman offered him.

"Don't you want Patrick's address?" he asked the young lady. "Give it to her, mother."

The old woman went to the drawer of the

dresser and took out a card on which was printed:

“PATRICK MAHON & BROS.,
“CONTRACTORS,
“SAN FRANCISCO, CAL.”

“But I live in Boston,” said Miss Knowles, “more than three thousand miles from San Francisco.”

“I have a son in Boston, too,” said the widow. “He isn’t much better than Tad in a way,” she added. “He’s wild for music, is John, and he’s spending his savings at a place called the Con-
Conser-vatory.”

“Oh, Mrs. Mahon, I know him!” cried the young lady. “I’m sure I do! I attend the Conservatory myself. Mr. John Mahon is a wonderfully clever violinist. You have two gifted sons,” she said, enthusiastically.

“Two!” echoed Mrs. Mahon. “Do you mean Tad and John? Well, John has a gift, surely, and he has made some money, too. But Tad! Ah, Miss Knowles, you should know my other children. There’s Patrick and Michael and Brian in business together in California, and they’re giving Peggy an education, and Martin a good trade. And Mary and Bridget are married to prosperous men in Chicago, and Katie and Norry are doing finely in England with a

milliner's shop in Manchester town. And there's Liza married to a grocer in Dublin."

"And Larry in heaven," added Tad.

After Miss Knowles had gone, he relapsed into one of his "fits of silence;" he went about with a melancholy visage, and his only comfort was in the botanical outfit and the manual which she had presented to him. He rambled and searched and dug away, until his mother grew quite dispirited.

"I'm afraid the American lady's toys brought him more harm than good," she murmured to herself.

One day a strange thing happened. Tad the Fool took a notion to root in the garden at the back of the cottage. Miss Knowles had taught him to use great care in getting roots in good condition for microscopical examination. He had loosened the earth about a gigantic weed which had grown in a neglected corner. The roots were exceedingly long and thready, and, as the boy inserted his hand to bring them gently to the light, he touched something solid. After taking up his specimen, he cleared away the earth, and saw what seemed to be a piece of iron. Without saying anything to his mother, he took the spade and dug the earth up around the spot, uncovering a rusty tin box. There was a handle in the lid. He tried to lift it, but its weight was

too much for him. Then he went in and told his mother.

"It's your grandfather's box!" she cried, inspiredly. "We never could find it, and he hid it before you were born, alanna."

It took their united strength to lift the box. It was locked with a padlock, and every inch of it was red with rust. Tad loosened the hinges with his knife, and lifted the lid. There lay a curious assortment of shells and pebbles which the old sailor had brought from foreign shores. Tad looked pleased with his find, but the old woman was disappointed. She handled the stones grumbly.

"'Twas thought he had money," she said. "He got plenty of bounty in the wars, and he was — well — a little close. When he was dying, he couldn't speak, but he kept pointing out through the window to the garden, and we thought 'twas a posy he wanted, and Liza brought him cowslips and daisies. But he died without telling us," she sighed.

Tad was emptying out the pebbles. Some of the shells were strung together like a necklace, and there were bits of coral, and sea-beans, and a queer old pipe of strange workmanship.

"Here's a bag of something!" exclaimed Tad, suddenly.

"It's only tobacco for the pipe," said his mother.

By this time he had all the trinkets out, exposing a wash-leather bag.

"It's a big lot of tobacco," remarked the fool. As he spoke, he was untying the string.

Mrs. Mahon gave a little cry. Gold! and so much of it! There were all sorts of pieces; the old man must have turned his bills and change into "shiners" wherever he went, for here, besides coins of the time of William IV., were gold Napoleons, and Spanish and Dutch pieces.

The widow grasped her son's arm.

"Tad," she said, "you did find your fortune, after all, alanna, and you shall go to Dublin — to have your head treated."

And that's how Tad the Fool got his start in life. His mother went with him as far as Cahir, and left him in charge of the "guard" on the train for Dublin. He had forgotten to get his sister's address, but he thought it did not matter much. Nor did it, as the sequel proved. Arrived at the capital, he wandered out of the crowded railway station and along the busy streets in utter amazement. When he had walked for more than an hour he began to feel weary and discouraged. He determined to ask questions. A pleasant-faced lady was passing. Tad accosted her.

"Please, ma'am, can you tell me where my sister Liza lives?"

The simplicity of the question made her smile, and she looked curiously at the boy.

"I am somebody's sister Eliza myself," she said.

"And I'm her brother Tad from Ballyvalley," said the fool.

It was actually his own sister to whom he had spoken, which was quite as lucky in its way as the finding of the money-box.

After that he had little trouble. The brothers and sisters agreed to leave the money to the "simple one." It wasn't a great fortune, after all, although it looked so fine in gold pieces, but it was enough to pay for Tad in a good school. That was the only "treatment" he required, so Doctor Harkaway said. And by and by it helped him with his university expenses, for even a scholarship such as he won does not cover everything!

All this happened a long time ago. Mrs. Mahon lived to a great old age, but at last she went the way of all mortals, simple and wise. As she died in the pleasant summer-time, when many of her children with their children were visiting the old land, Tad's mother had "a great funeral."

Among the mourners were Mr. and Mrs. John

Mahon (Mrs. John had been a Miss Knowles, of Boston), and a tall, dreamy-looking man, who wore glasses and — yes — actually long hair, and to whom Schoolmaster Boyle's son and successor spoke deferentially, as it became a country pedagogue to address a world-famous scientist. For the tall gentleman was Professor Thaddeus Mahon, F. R. S., of Trinity College.

He was such a fool!

CHAPTER IX.

OLD AUNT DOONEY

AUNT DOONEY was an old mulatto woman, a relic of the period “fo’ de wah,” and a most excellent cook. I have no idea how old she was; — maybe ninety for aught I know. She had been a slave on the place in the days of “Ole Marse,” my great-grandfather. Grandpapa said that she disappeared at the time of the Emancipation Proclamation, and returned to Storeytown twenty years afterward, with a “long fambly” of children, — half-brothers and sisters, — and three “maryiage ’stificats.” She had wedded and buried a trio of “colo’d gemmen” during her absence.

When her oldest daughter got married to a Storeytown darky, another colored gentleman at the wedding fell in love with old Aunt Dooney. Three weeks later the coffee-colored widow married Number Four. I don’t know how many years this fourth husband lived, but he had been dead some time when Aunt Dooney suddenly

appeared to claim a shelter at Mount Stuart. She attended the funeral of Grandmamma Storey (whom she had not known at all) and afterward presented herself to Grandpapa, saying:

"Don' yo' rec'lect me, Yong Marse? I'se Dooney, one o' yo' ma's kitching gals. I'se a po' widda, now, Yong Marse, an' I done come back to m' own folks to live, if yo' alls wants me. I'se a mighty good cook, Yong Marse."

So she established herself in the kitchen of the Story-Book House, leaving a colony of sons and daughters and grandchildren in "Little Africa," the negro quarter of Storeytown. I'm afraid she did not get on with her daughters, who had married freemen, "nobody's niggers," as Aunt Dooney called all of her race born out of servitude. She was respected and feared rather than loved by the Little Africans, whose freedom she held in contempt, although she had taken advantage of her own liberty at once.

"Aoh, Gor bless us!" would she say, taking her clay pipe out of her mouth, "talk 'bout yo' freedom, dar was freedom uh money an' uh kin'-ness when we'd jest call out 'Chris'mus gif'!' an' we'd get all we wanted, fo' de wah. Yas'm. 'Tso!"

From a new dress to an old yellow cigar ribbon, any sort of "gif'" was perfectly acceptable to Aunt Dooney. I cannot imagine what she did

with all the trifles she begged, unless, indeed, she played Lady Bountiful with them every time she visited Little Africa. Nine of her twelve children were married, and their nine families counted some fifty grandchildren for Aunt Dooney, — the Matriarch, as Frank called her. Whenever a brand-new little brown stranger came to Little Africa to live, Aunt Dooney, as the head of “de fambly,” was called upon to give a name to the unfortunate youngster. Usually, she took about two days to evolve one of her “oncommon” cognomens.

“It takes stedly,” she would say to the applicant. “I gotter stedly up de subjec’ fo’ I gives mah erpinion.”

Once I helped her out of a little difficulty. She had great prestige for wisdom in Little Africa, and she was just about wise enough to pretend to be wiser. I was swinging in the hammock near the kitchen-garden, lazily conning the morrow’s lessons, while Aunt Dooney was preparing apple-cobbler in the kitchen. I heard her moving about, and presently she came out of the glass pantry with a dish of russets and a paring-knife, and seated herself comfortably on the side-steps.

“Does yo’ want a napple, chile?” she asked, graciously.

I accepted the proffered fruit, wondering, mean-

while, what sort of an axe waited to be sharpened. I knew Aunt Dooney pretty well.

"You have a new grandchild, have you?" I hazarded.

"Yas, chile, I is. But who done tole yo'? Yas, 'tso, I got 'nother, an' in cou'se I gotter name it." Then after a pause, "I got names fur all mah fambly. I reckon I kin gub one to dis'n."

Was it possible that her stock of Algernons and Ethelindas was giving out? I said nothing, but waited watchfully.

"Dat worfless Jube Brown was hyar las' night," she continued, "an' he tole me dis hyar was a real stylish name."

She took from her pocket a newspaper clipping which she handed to me.

"I don' think so much uv it," she said, in a tone that contradicted her words, "an' yit it do soun' real good an' full."

The "name" was a single line in large type cut from a patent medicine advertisement:

"SPINAL MENINGITIS."

I coughed furiously; I frowned severely; I did anything and everything to prevent a fit of laughing, which would mortally have offended Aunt Dooney.

"Guess yo' swallowed a bit uh napple wrong

ways. Wan' drink, chile? All right ergain, is yo'? Well, how's dat name take yo' fancy?"

I struggled for calmness. "Spin-al Men-ingitis," I repeated, slowly and gravely.

"Yas. It do soun' full, don' it?" she queried, anxiously.

"Yes, it sounds full enough," said I. "But, Aunt Dooney, it's — it's unlucky. It's a name that would give a child a crooked back!"

"Gor bless us! Wait'll I see Jube Brown!" cried Aunt Dooney, in great excitement. "I'll gub him a crooked back, see if I don'!"

Since I had crushed Spinal Meningitis, I could do no less than to help construct a new appellation, and as it contained about half the alphabet, I am sure it sounded "full" enough, even to Aunt Dooney's critical ear. What "Zobeyda Agricolina" thought of her name when she grew old enough to pronounce it without stumbling, is more than I can conjecture.

About a week after this occurrence, I was on my way to the hammock in the same shady corner. Hearing voices in the kitchen, I stopped short, having no taste for "overhearings." Glancing through the glass pantry, whose arcaded transparency afforded a view of the open door of the cook's quarters, I saw Aunt Dooney ladling out a great plate of gumbo soup, while seated at the kitchen-table, his red handkerchief spread out

upon his knees, and his goggly eyes glistening in expectancy, was — Jube Brown! However he had managed to patch up matters with Aunt Dooney I know not, but evidently they were once more upon the friendliest terms. I stole away again very softly, not wishing to confuse the old woman with my presence, when she knew that I had heard her threaten this very Brown with a crooked back. But I had yet to measure the sublimity of Aunt Dooney's indifference to public opinion.

The Matriarch was a sight to see when she was "all dressed up." For visiting, or going to church, or upon other state occasions, she enveloped her skirts in an immense white apron, stiffly starched, and shining with a genuine flat-iron polish. Her Sunday-go-to-meeting head-gear was made up of a scarlet handkerchief wound tightly around her head, and atop of this a man's chocolate-colored "slouch" hat. As she had not fallen into flesh like most old negro women, but was very tall and thin, you can imagine her full-dress effect when she marched off, "like a grenadier," Nana said — carrying with her a gigantic prayer-book and "readin'-specs." Of course she could not read a line, but for all that, she never failed to carry the book and the spectacles.

One day Grandme sent me down to the kitchen with a gift for Aunt Dooney. It was an old-

fashioned gown, very light gray poplin. "Aunt Dooney," said I, "Grandme thinks you may be able to fix up this dress for yourself. See, it's good material, but it's about the style of Mrs. Noah's travelling-gown. Couldn't you dye it a nice cardinal red?" For the Matriarch dearly loved the primary colors.

Her eyes twinkled surprisingly. It was her usual custom to receive gifts with a superb air of indifference, as if to say, "I'll take it jes' to please yo'all, an' make yo' feel good." But for once she showed gratification.

"I done dream I'se gwine git frock like dat 'ar. I d'no whoall Miss Snow was, but if dat 'ar's her trab'lin'-gown she'd mighty good tas'. 'Tso!" She chuckled, as she fingered the pearly, silken folds. Then suddenly she stopped short and frowned suspiciously. "Howcome Mis' Granby di'n't gub dis to Arrishwoman?"

It had been offered to Nana, and I laugh yet to think of our old nurse's majestic refusal. "Ah, then, madam, I'm not so beggarly that I'm after seeking cold vittles, — nor yet old clothes. Thank ye; I suppose you mean well." The truth is, there was no love lost between Grandme and Nana. However, I couldn't very well explain these delicate matters to the touchy Matriarch, so I merely stated a self-evident truth.

"Why, Nana is *quite* fat, Aunt Dooney. You

don't suppose she could hook this on her?" holding up the scanty bodice. "Now, your waist, you see, is as slim as mine." Oh, dear! I'm afraid I was almost a diplomat in those days! But it was no difficult task to mollify Aunt Dooney. If it had been Nana —!

A few days later I saw the gray dress hanging on the line in the back yard. I was full of curiosity about the change in color, and I asked Aunt Dooney if she was going to dye it red.

"No, chile, I'm tired o' red, an' I'm gwine to leave dis hyar frock jes' color 'tis."

Pleased with this evidence of improved taste, I ran up-stairs and searched in my dressing-case for a little white silk handkerchief which I presented forthwith to the Matriarch. Again she was so effusively gratified that I wondered. She was a very clever renovator, and the done-over dress developed a lovely shade of pearly gray. As soon as she had finished pressing it she bundled up the gown to take it to one of her daughters who was skilful with needle and scissors.

Some two weeks afterward the parcel was brought back by one of her numerous grandchildren, and the next day Aunt Dooney appeared in the light dress, all ready to go out. For a wonder, she wore neither white apron nor slouch-hat. A cocky little white bonnet was perched on her gray wool, and I noticed that my handker-

chief was very elaborately shirred on the crown, which was further adorned with a monstrous white rose. Her brown wrinkled face gleamed beneath a veil of coarse white lace, and her skinny old hands were concealed in white cotton gloves. Grandme didn't seem to take in all these details. She was interested in the dress.

"Why, it looks very nice, very nice, indeed," she declared.

"Yes, it does," I put in; "you look like a bride, Aunt Dooney!"

If it were possible, I am sure the old woman would have blushed. As it was, she coughed a little before she announced:

"I jes' come say goo'-by. I ain't comin' back no mo'."

In reply to Grandme's look of astonishment, she said:

"Mirandy's gwine take mah place. She's a right smaht cook — I larned her mahself. I done tole her whut to git fuh Massa's dinnah, an' de chilluns' tea."

"Yes, but why are you leaving us?" asked Grandme.

Frank, who had been reading, closed his book, and looked up curiously at our departing cook.

We were all looking at her. She enjoyed one moment of dramatic suspense, and then, smoothing down her dress, she said, proudly:

"I'm gittin' maryied to-day."

"Married!" we exclaimed, in chorus. Really, we thought the old creature was going crazy.

"Yas'm; yas, chillun, gittin' maryied. 'Tso! I bin maryied fo' times a'ready, an' I reckon I kin git maryied ergain. I done gotter nice young man dis time. He name Jube Brown. I reckon he'll bury dis ole woman. Dis hyar's mah maryin' frock."

There was nothing for it but to give her a wedding present. Frank was quite equal to the occasion. On the top shelf of one of the school-room bookcases was a Washington directory, dated ten years back. It was bound in green with gold lettering, and as it had rarely been used, it was in prime condition. This treasure Master Frank troubled himself to procure.

"Here, Aunt Dooney," said he, handing her the unwieldy volume. "My best wishes to you!"

The bride-expectant received the gift with the most profuse expressions of gratitude.

"Always did say Marse Frank's gin'rous ef he di'n't show it all time. Some folks dey is like dat, waitin' to gub somepin' gran' **all** to once." Putting on the inevitable spectacles, she turned over the pages of the directory. I was very uncomfortable, in my efforts to keep from laughing, and Frank glanced threateningly at me. But the

Matriarch was quite unconscious of my agony of suppression.

“Dis hyar’s mighty good readin’,” she declared, sagaciously. “I ’spec’ it’ll gub me loss o’ comfuht.”

By and by Nana came in with Brose and Nellie, and Frank told her the news. The Matriarch had been gone only ten minutes, and I was not yet in condition to speak sanely. Nor was Nana’s comment calculated to restore gravity.

“The old black haythen! Married, is it? Married *five* times! Sure, and it’s buried five times she ought to be! And there’s people says them niggers have souls!” This with a disinterested glance at Grandme. “Souls, is it? Oyëa, they have that same — under their feet!”

We did not learn whether Frank’s present gave the expected degree of comfort or not, for Mirandy, the Matriarch’s daughter and successor, was a surly woman, not at all disposed to be loquacious. Whenever she said anything to us, it was something like this:

“Hyar, yo’ chillun! clar out, an’ don’ be trampin’ ovah mah clean kitching!”

For about six months we saw nothing of Aunt Dooney. One wintry day, however, I descried the familiar, tall, wiry form marching up the road, and I ran to meet her.

She made an elaborate pretence of not knowing

where she was, and I had to assure her twice that she was near our gate before she would consent to come in. The bride-Matriarch was most wondrously attired that day. Her dress was royal purple, her shawl white, and she wore a man's black slouch-hat. In her ears were immense rhinestones, and she had a huge black rubber ring on one finger. Very ostentatiously she carried in her hand a white handkerchief, with a deep black border.

I persuaded cross Miranda to make a cup of coffee for her mother, and while she was drinking it, I asked, jokingly, alluding to the handkerchief: "For whom are you in mourning, Aunt Dooney?"

"Why, Gor bless yo', chile, di'n't yo' know mah man was daid?"

"Your husband?" I cried, aghast at her coolness.

"Yas. He bin daid a — whole — week. Wonder Mirandy di'n't tell yo'."

"Hoo-oomp!" said the sulky Miranda. "Dat fool Jube Brown wa'n't worf tellin' 'bout, daid or 'live."

Aunt Dooney winked solemnly at me, and then it suddenly dawned upon me that the "old haythen" must have appropriated her daughter's beau.

"Yas, chile, yas," she went on, unheeding the

other's remark. "I done maryied and buried five husban's, young an' ole." She said this with the proud air of a conscious conqueror. "'Tso! I'se tellin' Mis' Johnsing 'bout it dis mornin' ovah de fence, an' she says: 'But ain't yo' gwine in mournin', Mis' Brown?' De ig'rance uh some folks! I up an' tole her pu'ple's mournin', an' white's mournin', an' brack's mournin', an' I says, 'Yo' pooh creature, yo' don' know a *full* set uh mournin' when yo' sees it!' I says."

And the Matriarch laughed till the glass earrings shook, happy to have crushed her neighbor with the weight of five-times-widowed wisdom!

After the old woman left us that evening in her variegated "mournin'" we saw her no more. The white shawl was all too thin for the season, and Aunt Dooney caught a severe cold, which developed into pneumonia. Within a few days the newly made widow was herself "daid," and the silent Miranda, in a burst of pride and confidence, informed us that Aunt Dooney had the "bigges' buryin'" ever known in Little Africa.



“‘YO’ POOH CREATURE, YO’ DON’ KNOW A FULL SET
UH MOURNIN’ WHEN YO’ SEES IT.’”

CHAPTER X.

UNCLE PAPA'S VIOLET CHAPTER

ONLY a violet! Only a vision of violets! —
Look, listen!

Behold the gleaming pillars of white marble, no whiter than the polished limbs of the living children. How beautiful is the city; how marvellously beautiful its people! Open air life and daily baths and athletic exercises have done wonders for satin skin and steely muscles, but these men and matrons, these youths and maidens, these angelic children, are richly endowed with the native beauty which physical culture has made so perfect.

Here is little Thais, daughter of beautiful Athene. See how lovely are her long, dark eyes, her straight little nose, her dimple-cleft chin, her crimson young mouth, her noble forehead shadowed by dark ripples of silken hair! She is white-robed and violet-crowned, and there are purple blossoms in her little hands. Here is her brother, young Demetrius, pupil of Phidias, the

sculptor. He goes to meet his master at the Parthenon, where the wondrous statues are to be placed. There he will see himself in marble; the beautiful youth is the model for the Phidian Apollo. He has come from the gymnasium; his skin is still aglow from his plunge in the marble pool; there is grace ineffable in every movement of the lithe figure in the banded tunic. Some one has thrown him a wreath of violets; the young Greek wears it carelessly on his rich, dark curls. There are violets everywhere; the children kiss them, the old philosophers study the veined petals, the bride fastens her peplum with bunches of the tiny blooms, the dead priestess holds violets in her waxen hands. Truly, it is the City of the Violets.

Phidias is immortal; Thais and Demetrius have passed to the Elysian fields; the baby Socrates is playing with Athenian violets. Time passes, the philosopher grows old and dies, and Plato and Aristotle walk among the violets. By and by there is a queer man sitting in a tub, to whom advances the young Macedonian, conqueror of the world. We all know that Alexander asked Diogenes, "What can I do for you, philosopher?" and that the old cynic made answer, "You can get out of my light, king!" but what we do not know is that Alexander said, "Thou old Gruff-and-Grim, dost thou not know that I

am all-powerful?" and that Diogenes, taking a little nosegay of purple flowers from the handle of his tub, replied, "I know that thou canst not make so much as one little violet, thou Incapable!"

The Roman yoke is on Athens; the people are enslaved; their beauty is bought and sold. And so, because it is no longer priceless, their honor is not worth a price. Greece has degenerated, the Parthenon is a ruin, the descendants of the brave and wise and beautiful are slaves of the heavy-lipped Turk or shambling street-hawkers in foreign cities. The City of Violets is dead among her withered hopes.

All through the ages there are queens and beggars and poets to honor the little violet, but its Grecian glory has perished. At last there is born into the old world a boy who might be Greek, poet, or warrior. A warrior he is; already in his boyhood he makes snow forts and defends them; already in fancy he leads his legions to victory. But when the snow melts he gathers the flowers he loves best, and these are violets. When he looks at them he is a poet, and his war dreams are forgotten.

Only a boy still, and a general! It is a pity; he might have been a poet. He is leading legions across the Alps; he has no thought for so small and so sweet a trifle as a violet. But, no; he

dismounts on the Ligurian slope as soon as he perceives a purple patch of bloom.

"A good omen!" he cries, for, being poetic, he is just the least bit superstitious. "Violets, Alpine violets! Look you, Lannes, if I win, this shall be my emblem. I have ever had a fancy for violets. You smile; ah, well, comrade, I am not all soldier!" And all that day the little man in the gray coat wears a cockade of violets in his three-cornered hat.

He wins, of course; he wins battles and enemies, and kingdoms and friends. He is the modern Alexander, the emperor of the world. He is a poet only when he writes the proclamations to his armies, and when he orders violets to be grown in the palace gardens and woven in the imperial tapestries.

His little son is laughing among the violets when the great victor becomes a great loser. Napoleon is deposed, and people breathe easier and talk familiarly of "Bonaparte," the Exile of Elba. But his soldiers have not forgotten him; they do not honor the king thrust upon them. "He will come back to us," they say, and they tell their daughters to have plenty of violets ready for the emperor.

He escapes from Elba; he returns, and on his old gray coat he wears a knot of violets. The soldiers fling away their white cockades and deck

their rusty chapeaux with Napoleonic violets; the little children strew violets in the path of the man who is about to lead their fathers to disaster and death.

It is all over; pity he did not stay at Elba and experiment with rhyme; he is a fallen warrior and an exile forever. There are no violets on bleak St. Helena; no violets and no victories. The world-conqueror says his prayers like a little child, and dies. He is buried on the lonely rock, and those who still cherish his memory bring violets from far-away France and plant them on his grave.

By and by his faults are forgotten, and his countrymen think only of the glory he gave to his empire. The emperor must not remain on that bleak rock; he wished to be buried in France; his wish must be respected. So after twenty years, the illustrious remains are borne home in a great funeral ship. As the vessel passes up the Seine, the grizzled old soldiers, who have journeyed many miles from their inland villages to give a last salute to their great commander, kneel on the river-bank and weep, as the violet-draped ship goes by. The funeral chariot proceeds through Paris to the Invalides; there is violet crêpe on the imperial coffin, and there are violets strewn along the route — hot-house violets, these, for the weather is bitterly cold.

The chapel is draped in violet; the old soldiers who follow the casket have violets fastened on their faded uniforms. The emperor is laid to rest among thousands of violets.

“And I, even I, republican though I am, *mes enfants*, when I went to Paris, I bought an immense bouquet of violets and placed it on the sarcophagus of Napoleon in the Invalides,” continued Uncle Papa, who, as you will have guessed, was the narrator of this violet story.

“But you don’t like Napoleon, Uncle Papa?” objected Frank. “I’ve heard you say that his glory was bought at the price of wholesale murder. You do not care for military reputation. You have some regard for Bonaparte just because —”

“Because he was fond of violets. Because, being the boldest of warriors, he loved the most modest of flowers. Without an atom of respect for imperial purple, I paid my tribute to the Violet Emperor!”

Uncle Papa liked us all, but he was fondest of Brose, and in the next chapters you may read some of the fables invented by our Alsatian Frenchman for the especial entertainment of the dearest little boy in the world. If you feel too grown-up to read Uncle Papa’s little fables, I’m sorry for you!

CHAPTER XI.

TWO WATER FABLES

I. — THE DISSATISFIED FISH

LONG ago there was a very little fish, a minnow, in a brook, the brightest little minnow in the whole water-world, his mother said. And the little fish heard this so often that he came to believe it himself, and began to grumble about his brilliancy's being confined to the narrowness of a little brook. Now, his mother had told him about Jupiter and the flying-fish. Not at all daunted by the lesson conveyed in that story, the little minnow prayed that he might become a large fish in a mighty river. Immediately he found himself larger and brighter; the brook widened; its flowery banks vanished, and the new trout leaped for very gladness in a flowing river. But no one welcomed him. "There is scarcely food enough for those who are here already," they complained. And when he told them of his wonderful transformation, they said: "Ah, in-

deed! Perhaps you were a very superior minnow, but none the less you are now a very inferior trout."

It was too true. Nearly every one was larger than he, and of a better color. The poor little, overpraised fish grew sick with jealousy, yet, instead of wanting to be a minnow once more, he wished to be the greatest of all water animals in the greatest of waters. No sooner had he uttered this wish than he found himself swelled immensely. His head grew square and very large in proportion to his body. He looked about him and could see no land, and for the first time he was frightened.

You see, a drop of water is nothing; a brook is only a thread; a river is bound between its banks; but an apparently limitless world of water is enough to appal even one who lives in the wet, as it were. Really, the vast Pacific seemed at that moment to be entirely too wet for our poor little minnow-trout. Then he found himself in the midst of a great congregation of frightful-looking creatures, each as large as ten thousand minnows, all with big box-heads, all blowing noisily to demand an explanation from the new-comer.

He was very much afraid until one of the great creatures pushed him insultingly; then his blood began to boil, for he was cold-blooded no longer.

He retaliated with a nudge of such force that it made the aggressor his friend at once. He plucked up courage and pushed his neighbors, who respectfully retreated. Then he, too, began to make that curious blowing noise, and what he said was, "*I am a whale* and a big one, and this ocean is but a basin full of water. *I am a whale!*"

So boastful was he that the other whales laughed at him and asked: "Do you think it so wonderful, then, to be a whale?" and he answered: "Ah, it is wonderful that a minnow should become a whale!" But they only laughed again, for, like all great creatures, they were good natured.

He was happy for a long time in his new life. He had plenty to eat, although he would never swallow a little fish, and he found plenty of room, though he often longed for the green banks and pebbly bottom of the little brook. Grievances began to come, for greatness invites small troubles. A thousand little crab-like creatures fastened themselves upon him and tortured his life. He grew weak from loss of blood, and they waxed strong as they fed upon him. He complained of his lot.

"Alas!" said the other whales, "you cannot escape annoyances; we, too, have our share of life's little troubles."

This was no comfort to the minnow-trout-whale. He swam furiously to rid himself of the barnacles, but they clung only the tighter. He travelled so rapidly that he soon found himself in sight of some rocky islands, and conceived the idea that he would scrape off the parasites upon the rocks. So engrossed was he with his small annoyances that he did not see a great trouble approaching. The whalers espied him, the whaling vessel sailed toward the prize, a cruelly sharp harpoon pierced his head. In the extremity of pain he cried aloud, "I wish I were the minnow in the brook once more!"

Even as he spoke the great ocean narrowed and narrowed; green banks almost met each other over the tiny streamlet; the whale collapsed and became again a little minnow in a little brook. But now he was old, and no longer brilliant. His mother, who had loved him so dearly, was dead; the young minnows laughed at his faded coat; worse than all, he had the remembrance of greatness within him, and he found the brook too narrow for his spirit. "It is a cruelly unequal world," sighed he. "Where — where can I find my level?"

"Water always finds its level," sang the brook.

"Then I wish I were water!" murmured the dissatisfied fish.

So he was turned into tears and named Discon-

tent, but, cry as he would, he was never changed again. And whenever you see people weeping without reason you may know that Discontent has blinded their eyes.

II. — LITTLE DROPS OF WATER

The great gray cloud opened its folds and the little raindrops tumbled down. How they flew!

“Look, look!” cried Patter. “There’s the earth! Wonder where we’re going?”

Drip-drop: “Into a brook?”

Pitter: “Down in a root-cellar?”

Fletter: “Into a grotto, I should say.”

And they guessed right, every one; but just then they found themselves falling on a wet green hillside. Running into the spongy earth they generously offered themselves to the flower-roots, but it had rained so steadily all the day that the roots were quite water-filled. So the little drops slipped down through little channels in the earth until they reached a cool, pearly grotto.

“Let us rest here!” they cried, for you must know that they were very tired after their long sky voyage. By and by, other drops followed them, and they were all very sociable together until the grotto was filled, when Fletter, whose

lungs were weak, began to complain of suffocation.

"It's too crowded here," said Patter. "We must try to find a way out."

So they scrambled around the sides of the grotto, but never a tiny window or door could they find. They could not get out through the entrance because they were unable to climb, and in the dark earth-grotto the sun could not reach to lift them up. Besides, hundreds and hundreds of drops were pattering for admittance. Indeed, it must have been a very heavy rainfall on the earth up-stairs.

"Nothing for it but to work our way out," decided Patter, who seemed to be a born leader. "To work, brothers! One for all and all for one!"

So all the little chisellers worked with a will, and in time their united efforts made a tiny crack in the rocky wall. "Wider, wider!" ordered Patter, forcing his way through. Every little drop scrambled after him, each one helping to widen the chasm. On they ran through the opening in the rock, through earth and sand, and — air at last. "Hurrah! we're up-stairs again," cried Patter.

As they trickled out they saw other little threads of water escaping from the rocky hillside.

"Welcome, comrades!" said Patter. "Union

is strength. Suppose we join forces, one for all and all for one?"

"Agreed, comrade!" responded all the little crystal threads. When they all ran together you should have seen how strong and how swift they became!

"Hurrah, hurrah! No more trickling; now we can tumble in a rill-rill-rill!" they shouted in unison. "One for all and all for one!"

The little rill ran down the hillside, kissing the pretty feet of the buttercups and daisies. Presently it sighted two other little rills.

"Join hands, comrades," called our brave, clever little rill, "One for all and all for one!"

So the three little rills ran together in one channel, and at that moment Patter made a discovery.

"Goodness gracious, brothers, we're a brook! Hurra-ah!"

The little brook began to sing as it tumbled down the hillside, and so sweet was its song that every little rill on the slope ran into the brook to join the chorus!

"One for all, and all for one;
That's the way our strength was won;
That's the way our work is done —
One for all, and all for one!"

Flowers sprang up to listen to the brook's happy family song, and children made hollow

pink cups of their hands, and drank from the sweet, cool waters. And when they had had enough they would say:

“You were a long time coming, dear little brook. Please don’t dry up and die and leave us!”

Oh, dear, no — such a strong little brook; no danger of its drying or dying! Fed by every little rill on the hillside all summer, you may be sure that it was alive and merry in the hot parching days when a weak, divided little brooklet would have gasped its last. It was the sap of the flowers, the comfort of thirsty oxen, the help of weary laborers, the delight of little children. It had so many Patters and Pitters and Fletters and Drip-drops that you could not tell one little globule from the other. Some of them stayed in the meadow and some of them ran down to the rivulet, thence to the river, and thence to the ocean, and many of them were sun-lifted to the clouds again, to tumble down by and by in little crystals of snow.

The next spring when the great sun, the good friend of all little water drops, melted the snows on the hillside, how our merry brook laughed in its dance of surging waters! It is now so strong and so swift that it has hopes of becoming a river some day. But I wish — don’t you? — that our

little streamlet may remain as it is, forever a sweet, fresh brook, forever fed by the hillside rills, forever feeding the meadow flowers, and forever singing its blithe little chorus — One-for-all-and-all-for-one!

CHAPTER XII.

A FOREST FABLE, A WINTER FABLE, AND A COURT FABLE

I. — TO - DAY AND TO - MORROW

IN the Forest of Difficulty dwelt two little wood-cutters, named To-day and To-morrow. To-morrow had lived in the forest a long time; To-day was a newcomer. In those days every one had a special motto, and To-morrow's was carved upon the door of his little hut. It was "*By and by.*" To-day read this motto and smiled, for To-morrow's hut was falling to pieces for want of repairs.

To-day sharpened his axe and cut down some trees to build a cottage for himself. "What's your hurry?" asked To-morrow. "Tarry with me awhile." But To-day only shook his head and pointed to the tumbling walls, for he was too busy to talk. To-morrow lazily watched him chopping and sawing and nailing; but when the busy one had finished his snug little home To-

morrow grew jealous and patched up his own house. Then he went to visit To-day.

"Your house is not complete," he said. "Where is your motto?"

"Oh, I do not leave it at home," said To-day. "I need it every minute, so I must carry it with me."

And then To-morrow saw a medal which hung from To-day's neck, and which bore one word, "*Now*."

"That's too short for a motto," said the lazy one.

"Life is short," replied To-day. "Excuse me; I must go to work."

"When?" asked To-morrow.

"Now," said To-day, pointing to his motto. And, putting his axe on his shoulder, he marched into the forest. Again To-morrow grew jealous, and he, too, set to work. He knew where the most valuable trees were, but he would not tell To-day. So while To-day cut down pine and ash-trees, To-morrow hewed cedar and oak. When To-day stopped working, To-morrow also stopped.

"I'm going to sell my valuable wood by and by," said To-morrow. And he went to sleep for a month. When he awoke, To-day's wood was sold, and that prompt worker had another load

ready. It was cheap wood, also, and To-morrow laughed.

“ Ah, you didn’t find the best trees yet,” he said. “ Wait until you see the price I’ll get for my wood by and by, — by and by!” And then he went to sleep for a year.

When he awoke again his roof was tumbling in, and he had grown so stiff that he could not work. But he hobbled out and beheld To-day standing in the doorway of his own mill, which he had built during To-morrow’s long lazy fit. To-morrow rubbed his eyes.

“ Ah!” he sighed; “ I, too, must build a mill by and by, — by and by.”

“ By and by leads to Never,” said To-day. “ I have bought the forest — good trees and all.”

“ Alas!” cried To-morrow; “ would that I had made better use of my time!”

So, instead of “ By and by,” he said “ Good-by ” to the forest. And he was never seen again.

In the Forest of Difficulty To-day’s workers never say “ By and by.” Sometimes the trees whisper: “ Where is To-morrow?”

And the workers’ answer has passed into a proverb:

“ To-morrow never comes. Our work belongs to To-day.”

II. — THE SPIRIT OF COLD

The Spirit of Cold blew his ice-trumpet, and the winds wailed to the echo. Again the Spirit blew the icy notes, and the birds shivered and flew away to the warm South-land.

“Ah, but the flowers cannot fly!” cried the Spirit, and he touched every pretty blossom with his frosty fingers. And some of the flowers died when he touched them; but others fell asleep, saying: “We shall be awake next spring!”

“The beasts cannot fly,” said the Cold Spirit, and again he blew a blast from his trumpet of ice. But the wild beasts ran away to their caves and dens, where the cruel Spirit could not follow them, and the tame beasts were cared for by men who gave them shelter.

“Ah, these men!” cried the Spirit of Cold, in anger. “They have no feathers, no leaves, no fur; yet they make clothes from flax and from cotton and from the wool of the sheep. I will kill these men.”

Then he blew shrill notes from his trumpet, and laughed when he saw men’s noses turning blue with cold, and little boys and girls blowing upon their cold-stiff fingers. But the great mill-wheels turned faster and faster, and more wool was spun into yarn, and yarn woven into cloth and flannel, and cloth and flannel cut out and sewed into

warm garments for men and women and boys and girls. And from the skins of beasts were made gloves and shoes to keep out the cold. So when the Cold Spirit blew again, every one had warm clothes, and the icy breath brought roses to pale cheeks. Indeed, there were so many rosy-cheeked girls and boys that the Spirit of Cold could not help saying, "How pretty! Did I paint that pink color on those young faces?"

But the Spirit grew naughty again, and ran down Poverty Alley, where clothes were thin and where cheeks were pale. And the Cold Spirit sounded his trumpet of ice, and poor little starved babies shivered and died, and poor women wept and wanted to die, too, and little girls and boys were hungry and cold and sick.

"Oh, ho!" laughed the cruel Spirit. "I will kill all these people!"

But good men and women came with milk and bread and meat and warm clothes, and the poor men grew brave, and the women and children became strong, and no more little babies died in Poverty Alley that winter. The poor little girls and boys ran out, too, like other children, and laughed at the Cold Spirit when he blew the pretty roses into their cheeks.

"I must work harder," thought the Spirit of Cold. So he made a new trumpet of ice, and he blew a keen North Wind through it. Oof! — it

was so cold that every one ran indoors. But the Spirit went to the doors and windows and blew the Northern blast through cracks and keyholes, crying, "I will freeze all mankind!"

But men had gone down deep into the earth and had dug up millions of tons of coal; they had gone to the forest for train-loads of wood, and when the Cold Spirit came, they were ready for him, — ready with glowing fires that warmed every corner of their houses. And the people gathered at the cheerful firesides, and the Spirit of Cold heard many saying: "How good God is to give us coal and wood to burn, that we may drive away the cold! Ah, but we must not forget the poor. We must send a ton of coal and a load of wood to Poverty Alley!"

And the Spirit of Cold ran away, crying: "They have my old enemy, the Spirit of Fire, for their servant. He will kill me if I linger."

So the Cold Spirit went to the river. "Here Fire cannot come," he said. "The Spirit of Water is the foe of the Spirit of Fire."

"No, no!" cried the Water Spirit. "Fire is my good friend now. He changes me into the Spirit of Steam. When I am Water I may turn slow mill-wheels, but when I am Steam I can pull boats and trains, and work great city mills, and heat houses, and —"

"How dare you speak of heat?" cried the

Spirit of Cold, angrily. And he took out his icy key and locked up the Water Spirit beneath a great door of ice. Ha-ha-ha! the boys and girls ran out and skated merrily on the frozen river.

“I have given them a new game, it seems,” said the Cold Spirit. “But I shall kill them yet. I can kill them with snow.”

Then he poured the white flakes all over the streets and roads and roofs and fields. But the children played with balls of snow and made snow men, and coasted down-hill on their new sleds.

“Only more fun for every one!” cried the Spirit of Cold. “It seems that I can do no harm. Perhaps — perhaps — I’d better try to do good!”

So he ran off to a Southern country, where the heat was killing people. There he blew gently on his trumpet until he drove disease away from the land, and every one said, “God bless the Spirit of Cold!”

III. — KING STEADY’S HEIR

Once upon a time the wise and good King Steady fell ill of an abscess in the throat, and the doctors said that he must die of starvation, because he could not swallow his food.

As he had no sons, a dispute arose among the lords who stood nearest to the throne as to which

of them should succeed to the crown in the event of King Steady's death.

"I — think — I'd — like — to — be — king," drawled Lord Lazybones. "It's easy work, and I could sleep as — long — as — I — liked — in the morning."

"Pshaw!" cried Lord Greedy. "Who cares for sleeping? Let me sit in the king's place, so that I may eat whenever I wish, and as much as I please!"

"Eating and sleeping, indeed!" said Lord Lofty, with much disdain. "Is there nothing else to live for, you beasts? I must be your king. Who is so great as I? Lord Beauty, I grant you permission to kiss the hand of your future sovereign!"

But Lord Beauty, peeping in the mirror, and simpering, paid no attention to this gracious offer. "I think the crown would be most becoming to me," said he. "And when I'm king, I'll have a hundred different court robes, and twenty different crowns, and I'll have — I'll have — gold heels to my shoes!"

"What a fine lot of kings you'd be!" growled Lord Fierce. "But don't trouble yourselves: I will *take* the crown, and defy the world to question my right! I shall have a vast army, and weaker kings must yield their thrones to me. Every one shall fear me. Brr-r-r-r! Why, I

mean to cut off the head of any one that dares to look at me, unless I order the look!"

So they talked, each for himself, caring nothing for the feelings of poor, sick, helpless King Steady, who was obliged to hear what plans these false, selfish courtiers had built upon his death. Only one lord had not spoken.

"Why have you said nothing, Lord Ready?" asked the king, in hoarse, feeble tones.

"Because my king yet lives," replied Lord Ready, "and also because it is hard to be a just king to all men. Still, if I were king —"

"Yes, — well?"

"I think I should try to rule my own desires before attempting to rule the lives of other people," said Lord Ready, quietly.

At this the Lords Lazybones, Greedy, Lofty, Beauty, and Fierce became very angry, and they all glared so wildly at Lord Ready that the sick king, always quick to note anything absurd, began to laugh. And he laughed, and he laughed, until — what do you think? — the abscess in his throat was broken in a long ha-ha-ha!

So the wise and good King Steady got well, and lived many years. Before he died, he named Lord Ready for his heir.

"You were all too willing to be king," he said to the other lords.

And they answered:

“ Was not Lord Ready also willing? ”

“ Ah, it is one thing to be willing, and quite another thing to be willing and ready! ” quoth the wise old king.

Now, if you have skipped the fables, perhaps you will find the next story more to your taste, a veritable Grownup-town tale. It is Uncle Papa's, too. I think he was very well acquainted with Robin Goodfellow.

CHAPTER XIII.

ROBIN GOODFELLOW'S WISDOM

ONCE upon a time, Grownup-town might have been found on the old map of Severica. It was a peculiar community, inasmuch as no children were allowed within its precincts until after a certain memorable Hallowe'en. Grownup-town had four gates, like an ancient city, and they were put on diagonally, in this fashion — N. E., S. W., N. W., S. E. Really, if one were not clever at remembering, these alphabetical barriers might have been puzzling. One old gentleman in Grownup-town always called the gates News-News, which, for a mere Grownup, wasn't at all a bad anagram.

This old gentleman was fully twenty-nine years of age, and he was quite ready to die. He had given his order to the undertaker, and his friends were very busy getting their mourning prepared. As he was exceedingly good-natured, every one was sorry in anticipation of his demise. No one lived beyond thirty in Grownup-town. It was

one of the queer rules of the queer place. And so, when each inhabitant had attained the age of twenty-nine years, eleven months, and four weeks, he or she surrendered whatever property might have been acquired in twelve years, and after having made all necessary arrangements, invariably expired on the last second of the last minute of the last hour of the last day.

You may wonder where new citizens could be secured to take the place of those who had departed. There was no difficulty about that. Once a year, on November 1st, the gates N. E., S. W., N. W., S. E., were thrown open and eighteen-year-olds admitted. It is but fair to the Grownups to state that they always issued a proclamation, a month in advance of "Admission Day." This proclamation stated distinctly that candidates for admission to Grownup-town must be neither more nor less than eighteen years old, and that their term of residence could not exceed twelve years, since no Grownup had ever lived to be thirty-one.

Why, then, were the gates N. E., S. W., N. W., S. E., besieged with applicants on every annual Admission Day? Alas! the Board of Aldermen gave to each new citizen a thousand dollars. Very little, you would say, for the enormous price of an early death. Alas, and alas again! Did not every candidate confidently

agree to himself that he would live to a good old age, whatever others might do?

Was Grownup-town, then, an unwholesome place? Not at all. It was charmingly situated, with plenty of park grounds, pure water, broad streets, and the combined attractions of country air and city conveniences. There never was such a tidy place! There were no peanut wagons, no banana stands, no red balloon men, no broken toys. In a word, no boys and girls! Landlords never quarrelled with tenants on that score. It was as easy to rent a house — as — to die.

The old gentleman of whom I have spoken had been thinking very seriously, after the manner of all twenty-nine-year-old Grownups. Another odd custom of Grownup-town was that no one had a long first name, a single letter doing duty instead. This gentleman's name was C. Welle, and as I have said, he had been thinking of his approaching end. He looked back over the years that had vanished since he, an eighteen-year-old, had passed the Rubicon(s) of N. E., S. W., N. W., S. E. He had been a comely youth, tall and slender, with bright eyes, satiny cheeks, and brown curls. And he had sold his life-right for a thousand dollars, confident that thirty would mean sixty and perhaps ninety years old, before he need leave beautiful Grownup-town.

He smiled bitterly. He had been disillusioned

during the past dozen years. Life moved heavily in the place from which childhood had been banished. At twenty-four C. Welle had been a bald-headed, middle-aged man. At twenty-nine he was stooped, his few remaining locks were silver white, his teeth had fallen out, and in every respect he was like an old man of ninety in the world outside Grownup-town. He fondly called himself twenty-nine still. But on the 2d of November he would be thirty, and he had not taken to his death-bed on the 31st of October. In fact, he determined to take a walk.

"It will be the last," he said, sadly. "I go to-night to look through the gate which I closed behind me long ago."

He was very feeble, and it was with difficulty that he made his way to the N. E. gate.

Shadowy forms were without. He suddenly remembered that it was Hallowe'en, and recollections of the boyish pranks of the past crossed thoughts with stories of spirits reappearing on November eve. He felt no fear; curiosity prompted him to peer through the gate.

Strange spirits these! Laughing, and talking, and cheering, a crowd of rosy-cheeked youths and maidens. He remembered with a pang that the morrow, November the 1st, would be Admission Day. On the 2d he must be dead, so that one of these could take his place. Here they were,

all eager to enter, all hopeful of living long to enjoy their good fortune. He made up his mind to warn them.

"Beware!" he cried. "Remain without if you value life!"

But the young people laughed.

"Look at me," he said, again. "I am not yet thirty, and I am dying of old age."

They laughed louder.

"He is ninety, if a day," said one.

And then:

"How much are you worth, Graybeard?"

"Two days," he answered, gloomily. "But you mean money-worth. I shall leave one hundred thousand dollars. And yet, how foolish, how reprehensible —"

But they would not let him preach, so enthusiastically they cheered. "Hurrah for Grownup-town and its rich fortunes!" and one sang:

"We are candidates for full admission,
And we accept each stern condition.
For, don't you see,
We know that we
Can comprehend the whole position:
A thousand, ah! 'twill multiply
Into a million ere we die."

It was useless to speak to them. They were money-blinded, just as he had been. He sighed and turned away. An odd sound behind him at-

tracted his attention — a little continual pitter-patter like the rustle of dropping leaves. He paused a moment. Pshaw! it *was* the sound of falling leaves. What more natural on November eve?

Yet he certainly heard something like a laugh — a thin little whistling laugh. He looked all around him. Suddenly a mocking voice floated up from somewhere:

“C. Welle! C. Welle! You can't see well!”

Involuntarily he turned his gaze on the ground. There stood a little man, fourteen inches high, clad all in brown. As C. Welle looked closer he saw that the little man had big round brown eyes, a brown hood over brown locks, a golden brown beard, and quite a beautiful tawny brown complexion.

“A fairy!” cried C. Welle.

“No such a white-faced thing!” retorted the little fellow scornfully. “A Brownie, if you please, sir.”

“But,” hesitated C. Welle, “I thought Brownies were beneficent spirits, and surely, Hallowe'en is a night for prankish fairies?”

“Yes,” assented the Brownie; “that's very true in the outside world. But here in Grownup-town the tricky fays would have nothing to do. You see, all the mischief has been done by the Grownups.”

“Mischief!” echoed C. Welle, indignantly. “Why, there isn’t a boy or girl in the whole town.”

He was really angry at the aspersion cast upon Grownup-town. What he felt was a sort of proprietary indignation; he was a member of the Board of Aldermen, a senior member now, and he had been mayor twice, serving each term of four months with Grownup wisdom and dignity.

The Brownie laughed.

“You have been good enough to say that Brownies are beneficent sprites,” he said. “Now, it has occurred to me that on Hallowe’en, when the mischievous fays are abroad in other places, it might be wise to visit this horrible Grownup-town and see what good we Brownies could do.”

The old Grownup began to protest, but the Brownie stopped him.

“I know all about it,” he said. “You make your laws and you keep the boys and girls out. Your town is clean and tidy, and you are all thriving — especially the undertaker and the tombstone cutter. Now, I have a plan. I followed you to-night because I know that your heart has not shrivelled up in Grownup-town. You are to die the day after to-morrow, are you not?”

C. Welle shuddered.

“And you will have attained the great age of thirty,” the Brownie went on. “Now look at me. On the day after to-morrow (November 2d is my birthday, too) I shall be, — let me see, — seven and two and five and sixty-three over; yes, I shall be one thousand four hundred and sixty-three years old!”

His listener looked at him in amazement.

“You are — you are —”

“I am — the original Robin Goodfellow!” finished the Brownie, proudly.

“And Puck?”

“Oh, yes, Puck. That’s one of my names. I put it into Shakespeare’s head when he was writing ‘Midsummer-Night’s Dream.’ Yet he made me appear mischievous, and that I’ve never been. But we wander from the subject. Would you like to live fifty years longer?”

“Would I — could I? Oh, R. Goodfellow, you are good, fellow. Only tell me how!”

“There’s the usual lot of fools outside the gates clamoring to get in,” said the Brownie, “but among them at the S. W. gate there is a little child. This child can be the means of prolonging your life, for know, oh foolish wise-man, that when your people banished the children, they banished innocence and sweetness and joy, and they invited old age to creep on apace. In the outside world children are tolerated, and

often treated kindly, and thus people live to be eighty, and sometimes ninety or one hundred. One reason for my great age is that I love children, not in the careless way of worldlings, but with an absorbing devotion. And there is another reason: I have no love for money."

He looked sharply up at his tall companion.

"You are worth a hundred thousand dollars," he said. "To-morrow it will be confiscated by the Board of Aldermen. A thousand new citizens will be admitted, and each will receive a thousand dollars. Am I right?"

C. Welle bowed.

"That will require a million dollars, and to meet the demand the sum must be in the treasury. Suppose the treasury should be empty, what then? No new citizens. So I propose to send my army of Brownies to empty the coffers."

"What good will that do?" asked C. Welle.

"Haven't I told you? No premium offer, no citizens."

"And then?"

"Why, children will be admitted, of course!" he cried, triumphantly. "And now, as the first step, give me your fortune."

"They will demand it to-morrow," objected the old citizen.

"What then? It will only be missing, like

the rest. Give it to me. I give you my word I will return it to you in a week."

C. Welle smiled grimly.

"In a week I shall have been dead five days," he said.

"Not if you will be guided by me. I have lived fifteen centuries because I love little children and despise money. I don't expect you to hate your gold, — that wouldn't be natural in a worldling, — but you must give up the cash for a time, and you must take a little child this very night."

They had been walking all this time, and now they stood in front of C. Welle's mansion.

"You have prospered in Grownup-town," remarked Robin Goodfellow.

"Yes," answered C. Welle. "I bought cemetery lots with my thousand dollars when I came, and I sold them again at a good profit. I am rich, and yet I can claim but a corner in the cemetery after to-morrow."

"Don't be depressed," said the Brownie. "You began by making a corner in cemetery lots, you know."

They entered the house, and when they emerged, Robin Goodfellow carried a tin box as large as himself. To the owner's surprise, the box gradually dwindled down to correct Brownie proportions.

"How did you do that?" he cried.

"Can't explain at length," replied Robin. "Pressed for space. Now, Mr. C. Welle, if you will come to the S. W. gate I'll get you your life-preserver."

The crowd of applicants at this gate was quite as large and as noisy as at the other. The clamoring candidates did not observe the Brownie, as he slipped through the bars and returned with a little boy.

"Here," he said, laying the child's hand in C. Welle's trembling palm. "Take him home and be good to him. Good-by, good boy; see well, C. Welle!"

In a moment he was gone.

C. Welle looked at his little companion, and a thrill of delight went through him. In twelve years he had not seen the face of a child. Now Grownup-town no longer deserved its name. One of the unbidden was within its gates. C. Welle feared detection. If the little fellow should be discovered he would be sent back, and Robin Goodfellow's plan must fail.

"I wish I could carry him," C. Welle mused.

A new feeling of strength had come to him with the first contact of the little soft hand. He stooped and lifted the child with more ease than he could have taken up a leaf the day before. Thus he carried his burden unperceived and returned home a wiser and a gladder man.

The following day a committee of aldermen waited upon C. Welle. They seemed to be very much perturbed about something, and they were greatly shocked to find Mr. Welle sitting up and looking better than he had appeared for twelve months.

"My dear C. Welle," said the spokesman, whose name was D. Clare; "I am astonished that a man of your wisdom should prefer to die in a chair."

"Perhaps I shall not die yet," ventured C. Welle.

"He is getting childish," whispered B. Sharpe, another of the committee. "Do not pay any attention to his ravings. Demand the money formally."

"Mr. Welle," said D. Clare, "you have been in Grownup-town the full term of years. We have looked up to you for the past four years as a model of wisdom. You know the laws. Tomorrow you die and your fortune goes to the admission fund."

"My fortune has disappeared," said C. Welle, quietly.

The committee turned individually and collectively pale.

"And all the rest of the fund is missing!" cried B. Sharpe. "Dear Mr. Welle, did your money disappear very mysteriously?"

"Very mysteriously," asserted C. Welle.

"We did not wish to disturb your last hours with the bad tidings," said D. Clare, "but I declare it annoys us very much to find that your superb fortune has gone with the rest."

"Gone with the rest!" echoed C. Welle.

Affairs were in a bad state all day in Grownup-town. A stormy meeting of citizens gathered to discuss the robbery. It was decided unanimously that no new citizens could be admitted, unless they would enter without bounty. A herald was sent to each of the four gates to proclaim this decision. Ten minutes afterward the gates were deserted.

The next day a singular thing happened. C. Welle kept on living. The following day the phenomenon was repeated. Such a thing had never been known in the annals of Grownup-town. Actually, the man had entered on his thirty-first year! It was an isolated case, for the 999 thirty-year-olds who had been admitted with C. Welle at the age of eighteen died very dutifully on the eventful day — their thirtieth birthday.

The next day the entire Board of Aldermen called on the oldest resident. Among the visitors was a physician, a grave, elderly man of twenty-seven. He examined the aged Grownup carefully, and declared that, so far from showing any signs of dissolution, Mr. Welle was actually gain-

ing strength hourly. Those who looked at him could not doubt this. C. Welle had regained his rosy color, he walked erect, his eye was bright, his speech clear, and his judgment sound. The succeeding day found him still better, and a scientific committee was appointed to wait on him and to ask whether he had discovered the secret of prolonging Grownup life. Mr. Welle replied that he had discovered such a secret, but that he could not be induced to divulge it except under promise that it should be adopted by Grownup-town.

Another meeting was held, and the result was that all the aldermen's signatures appeared on a pledge to adopt C. Welle's "invention." They were so anxious to live long, those aldermen! So C. Welle gave away his secret by writing on a paper three words. These were:

"Admit children free."

"Proof, proof!" cried the eager aldermen.

The rejuvenated Grownup immediately produced his "proof," none other than the little yellow-haired lad who had brought youth and strength to C. Welle. The child, who had been named D. Scoveree, was brought out and feasted to his heart's content, and the new measure duly formed an amendment to the constitution of Grownup-town.

As for the missing money, it returned as mys-

teriously as it had disappeared. Thanks to little D. Scoveree, Mr. C. Welle was quite a young man by the end of the week. When Christmas came Robin Goodfellow sent a message by one of his trusty Brownies:

“I hear that Grownup-town is to be changed to Growing-town. Be good to little D. Scoveree. Tell the other Grownups that they must treat the children properly, else will I come next Hallowe'en to punish the selfish hard-hearts. C. Welle, see well, I wish you well!

“ROBIN GOODFELLOW.”

In Growing-town the streets are not so quiet as they once were, but the people don't seem to mind. There are cycling clubs and baseball and football clubs and toy shops. As for confectioners and fruiterers, they are making a fortune. Small wonder that children are eager to go to Growing-town, where they are so well treated! No need for the Brownies to visit that popular town, since there is no more good work for them to do. Who knows? Perhaps they may come to reform some other place next Hallowe'en. Look out, Grownups! *Admit children free!*

CHAPTER XIV.

AN IRISH FAIRY TALE

“TELL us a story!”

It was raining; it was five o'clock in the afternoon; there was a bright fire in the nursery grate, and Nana, our dear old nurse, was in high good humor because — no matter about the “because!” Sufficient to say that the conditions for story-telling were ideal. And so we children sat down on the rug and gazed expectantly at Nana.

The old woman took off her spectacles, upon the glasses of which the glow of the fire was reflected too dazzlingly for her weakened eyes. The mended stocking dropped into her lap, and her wrinkled hands clasped contentedly above it as she began:

“Once upon a time — ah, then, but what sort of a story'll I tell?”

“Oh, Nana, you are too bad!” I exclaimed, pettishly. “I thought you had begun!”

“Tell a ghost-story,” suggested Frank.

Brose chimed in, "Yes, ghostus, Nana," and little Nellie echoed, shrilly, "Dostus, Nana!"

"How'd a tale o' the Good People do?" said Nana, meditatively.

"Aw, good people! we're always hearing that," objected Frank, who detested what we used to call "Pious-Peter stories."

Nana laughed. "I mean the fairies," she explained. "In Ireland we call them the Good People, because if we didn't they'd — they'd —"

"They'd be bad people?" I supplemented.

"Just that," said Nana. "Well, then, once upon a time, in Ireland, when the Little Good People lived in their raths all over the country — But how do I know you haven't heard it before?"

Nana, as she grew older, was apt to interrupt herself sometimes, to our intense annoyance. We all looked at her in silent protestation — except Brose, who cried, eagerly:

"Oh, no; we didn't never hear it yet!"

Brose always was too knowing. Nana smiled, and went on:

"Well, anyhow, the Little Good People lived in their raths, and anybody that would go near one of the hills after sundown would see sights and hear wonders. There were two lads in the village of Emly, and if there were two good friends anywhere, 'twas Austin and Larry. Austin was a dreaming sort of a boy, always

thinking po'try, and Larry was just the opposite, wide-awake and full o' fun. But they were great friends, for all their difference.

"Larry'd tell his tricks to Austin, and Austin'd read his verses to Larry, and one'd admire th'other for what he couldn't do himself. And though Austin made up po'try about Larry, Larry wouldn't play jokes on Austin at all, at all, until — There is always that 'until' to bring mischief, children."

Nana looked solemnly at us, and we tried to look as solemnly at her in return. I know I did not change countenance, although Frank attempted to tweak my arm slyly, — as if pinching one's elbow could hurt!

"Austin was kind o' delicate like," continued Nana. "He was to study for the priesthood after he would get a bit stronger. And Larry, big rosy fellow that he was, was to be a cattle-dealer, so his father said, who was one before him, but Larry thought in his own mind it'd be finer to be a sojer. As for the Emly people, sure they thought that since Larry wasn't an imp, it's a play actor he ought to be for all his tricks. And be the same token, a wandering actor came to the village one time, and had a show all by himself, making little wooden figgers talk and throwing his voice hither and thither. I don't know what you'd call him."

“A ventriloquist,” said Frank, promptly.

“Eh, maybe. It’s a long word — vin— vin— ah! sure ‘fairyman’ is easier, and that’s what the Emly children called him. But Larry watched him close, and tried to do like things himself, and found he had the power, too, but he didn’t know how to use it. So what did he do but strike up a friendship with the fairyman — he could make friends with any one, could Larry, if he liked. And the man took a fancy to him and showed him the way of it, and wanted him to go about with him. But Larry’d rather play tricks at home, and you may be sure it’s many a queer trick he played on the people after he’d learned to throw his voice round like the fairyman. And sorra one knew how ’twas done nor who did it; sure the little vagabond didn’t even tell Austin, and him his best friend.

“Well, to make a long story short, as I said, he never played a trick on Austin till the strong temptation came. It was this way. He found Austin dreaming away as usual one day as late as ’tis now, and where was the dreamer but in the graveyard, stretched on an old grave and talking out loud in his dreams, like all poets do, as I’m told. And Larry, for fun, hid behind a little hill opposite and listened. And Austin said, like this:

“Where go ye, oh spirits,
When the grave is dug?
Your failings and your merits
Alike are —

“ ‘Are what? I can’t think of e’er a rhyme
for dug but mug, jug, rug, hug, snug, — these
won’t ever do. I’ll try again, and leave out
“dug.”

“ ‘When the grave is filled — no; — when the
grave is round — there!’ And he began again:

“Where go ye, oh spirits,
When the grave is round?
Ye cannot leave your merits
Within that grassy mound —

“ ‘Oyea, that doesn’t suit, ayther.

“Where go ye, oh, spirits?
Oh, where can ye be found — ”

“ Suddenly a ghashly voice answered, as if
’twas in his ear:

“Where-are-we-found?
In con-se-crated ground!”

“ It was Larry at his tricks, but how was
Austin to know when he’d never heard him before
at the vin— vin— ”

“ Ventriloquism,” said Frank.

“ Vin-thrill-o-squeezem,” pronounced Nana,

triumphantly. "Well, Austin didn't know one thing about Larry's power, and sure he thought 'twas ghosts. But he was a brave lad, for all he was so delicate, and he calls out:

" 'Who speaks?'

"And Larry, keeping up his joke, answered in a terrible voice:

"Who — speaks?

I, — John — Hicks!"

"Now, John Hicks was dead and buried, and the words were chokey and low down, as if they'd come out of a grave. Austin felt himself growing cold, and all of a sudden he gave a fearsome cry, and fell over in a faint.

"Then was Larry sudden-sorry, and he wanted to run to his friend, but for the life of him he couldn't stir. And he tried to call out, but sorra word could he say. And then he saw a teeny weeny little man about as high as a candlestick standing before him. And the bit of a man was dressed in green, and on his head was a green peaked cap.

" 'Hold him fast,' ordered the fairy, for a real fairy it was this time. 'Don't let him move.'

"And then Larry knew that about twenty little fairymen were sitting on his shoulders. He tried to protest, but his voice was only a fairy-struck whisper, as he said:



“‘HOLD HIM FAST, DON’T LET HIM MOVE.’”

“ ‘I want to help Austin.’

“ ‘You want to help him?’ says the fairy, scornful-like. ‘He’ll be helped without you, imp o’ mischief that you are, frightening a lad that’s got the real poetic gift and that makes songs every day for the fairy folk. And you must sit here — here! here atop o’ the fairy fort to play your wicked pranks, must you? We’ll show you how to choose your place better next time!’

“ ‘Ah, then, am I on a fairy fort?’ whispered poor Larry.

“ ‘That you are, and it’s under it you’ll be — Hark! That’s good! Well done, Crop and Mop!’

“ And then Larry saw the gravedigger, Mike Shields, coming along, and there was two fairies pulling at him to make him hurry; but he didn’t know it, for how could he see them? He wasn’t fairy-struck, like poor Larry. He had his spade over his shoulder, and was whistling away as merry as you like, when he saw Austin. And then the fairies ran off, and big Mike stooped down and looked at the poor lad lying there still as death, and every bit as white as that same. It wasn’t a minute’s work for the strong man to lift the boy to his shoulder in place o’ the spade, and to trudge off home with him.

“ Larry was so glad to see Austin taken care of that he tried to laugh for joy, but couldn’t utter

a sound. To add to his distress the ground began to open out under him, and all the Little Good People jumped off his back and caught hold of his hand and began to drag him down — down — down — ”

Ting-a-tang-ling-lang-long!

It was the bell for our tea. Nana stood up and struck a match to light the gas, while Frank and Brose and Nellie and I pleaded in chorus :

“ Oh, Nana, *please* finish ! ”

But the order-loving old nurse was already putting out Nellie's clean pinafore and a fresh collar for Brose.

“ After tea,” she promised.

So we had to leave “ Larry ” in the down-down state — “ County Down,” Frank said — and to wait in ill-repressed impatience for the conclusion of Nana's fairy tale.

CHAPTER XV.

THE KELTIC JANIUS

AFTER tea we all gathered again around the nursery hearth. The firelight cast a cheerful glow upon our faces; the curtains were drawn, and the dreary tattoo of the rain beating against the window-panes came to our ears softened like a minor accompaniment to our dear nurse's crooning voice.

"Where was I, children?" she asked.

"Down, down, down —"

"Oyea. Well, then, Larry had to wink his eyes very fast when he found himself at last on the soles of his own feet within the fairy fort. Sure the lights would dazzle any one after the gray gloaming in the world above stairs. Larry thought he never saw so many lights, and every one o' them so weeny — no bigger nor flies, and about as thick as flies in the middle o' summer. All the thousands o' little fairy lamps were as green as shamrocks, and their light made the place look oneearthly to mortal eyes. And how

the Little Good People swarmed about Larry! The fairyman who had talked so harshly to him in the graveyard began pointing at him, and saying to the others:

“ ‘Here’s a mortal villain! Sure, he’s frightened the gentle lad that makes songs for the Little Good People! Crop! Mop! — do ye both go after the poor stricken boy and his bearer, and bring me the news of how he is. And — *if he dies* — ’

“ The commanding fairy said no more, but there was a threat in his fist as he shook it at Larry, while Crop and Mop scampered off to get tidings of Austin.

“ Then a fattish fairy spoke. ‘Ay,’ says he, ‘we were listening when the song broke off, and we wondered. The last we heard was an ugly voice saying, “In — con-se-crat-ed — ground.” ’

“ ‘And ye didn’t go making a song o’ that?’ queried Top, the first speaker, in disdain; ‘why, ’twas this spalpeen here made that up.’

“ And he kicked Larry so angry-like that the big boy had to laugh, for the wee creature’s kick was like the kick of a bird might be.

“ ‘Uh, uh, don’t laugh,’ whispered Flop, the fat fairy, who, like all stout people, was inclined to be amiable. ‘Sure, Top can poison his kicks when he likes.’

“ Top had marched off to the other end o’ the

fort after his kick, so he didn't hear ayther the laugh or the warning. Larry tried to answer the fat fairy, but he couldn't speak at all, at all. So Flop, in his kindly way, jumped up on the boy's shoulder, and touched his lips with a green twig shaped like a key. And then Larry spoke, and what he said was:

“ ‘Thank you, my good fairyman. And tell me, is Top your king?’ ”

“ ‘Not he!’ replied Flop. ‘Sure, we haven't any king; it's a queen we have, and she comes here but once a month. There's ever and ever so many fairy forts in her queendom, — sure, she can't spend all her time here. But she always leaves some one of us in charge during her absence. It was Top's turn this time, and a mighty contrairy month we had of it with all his peevishness. The queen is coming this very night, and his reign is nearly over, so he's crosser than ever. And sure, he has some reason, for we were trying to have a chorus ready against the queen's coming, and we were listening to the boy that makes songs in the graveyard, when you spoiled everything with your pranks. Now, why couldn't you make a song for us? Top might let you off easy if you do that.’ ”

“ ‘I never made a song in my life,’ said poor Larry. ‘But I'll try anything to get out o' this.’ ”

“ ‘Do try,’ urged Flop. ‘I'll go now, and

leave you in peace. There's one thing a fairyman can't do, and that's to make po'try. But we know how to treat poets, and sure, that's something.'

"So the little friendly, fat fairyman trotted off to join his comrades, who were making great preparations for the coming o' the queen, and left Larry sitting disconsolate on the floor.

"The boy looked at all the weeny green lights and all the weeny little men running and hopping and flying hither and thither. He noticed that every little fairyman was dressed in some shade o' green, and that they were making a small moss-green throne at the one end o' the room. And remembering Austin's way o' making rhyme with 'jug' and 'mug' and 'snug,' Larry began muttering to himself:

"'Green rhymes with queen. Think o' that, now! And fairy — sure, fairy rhymes with airy, and with dairy, and with — with Tipperary, to be sure, the very county Emly itself is in!'

"And what with humming and rhyming, didn't he make a song after all, and what's more, didn't he begin to sing it. For Larry had a sweet voice of his own, mind you! And the fairymen, hearing him, all ran nearer to listen, Top forgetting to scold Flop for loosening the boy's speech, so sudden-glad was he to hear the song, and the rollicking chune Larry put to it:

“All attired in emerald robes,
Robes o’ fairy green-o;
Joyfully we dance and sing,
Welcoming our queen-o.”

“‘Hurroh, hurroh!’ cried the fairymen in great glee. ‘How grandly he’s worked in the real Irish O’s!’

“Larry, it seems, thought these same O’s the weakest points o’ the verse, but he tried to look very wise and clever when they praised him.

“‘More, more!’ they cried.

“‘And what will you pay me for more?’ demanded cute Larry.

“‘Anything!’ they shouted, eagerly. ‘Anything on the earth or in the sea.’

“‘Well,’ says the boy, ‘I want my liberty, only my liberty!’

“‘And for what d’ye want your liberty?’ asked Top, in his most peevish tones.

“Larry’s eyes filled with tears. ‘I want to see how my dear Austin is getting on,’ says he.

“‘Serves you right if he’d be dead of your tricks,’ grumbled the little commander. ‘But for the good o’ your song, we’ll let you off on condition. Promise now that you’ll never play pranks on a poet again.’

“‘I promise,’ agreed Larry.

“‘Promise that you’ll not play tricks on old folk, or sickly folk, or on little children.’

“ ‘I promise.’

“ ‘Promise that you’ll never bring mischief again into a graveyard or anear a fairy fort.’

“ ‘Never — never! I promise!’

“ ‘Well, then, go on with your song, and when ’tis done you can go home.’

“ Larry was overjoyed. He chuned up again briskly :

“ Welcome, welcome to the fort,
Royal lady fairy;
Though your world has many a court,
The best is in Tip-per-ary!”

“ ‘That’s not so good,’ remarked Top, critically. ‘Not enough O’s in it.’

“ ‘But for what do you want so many O’s, anyway?’ asked Larry.

“ Fat Flop good-naturedly answered him :

“ ‘O is our mystic letter. In the first place, it’s round like a fairy fort, and you can’t tell the beginning nor the end of it. Then, you see, it’s good Irish.’

“ ‘And it is the name o’ the queen,’ added Top, severely. ‘Her Majesty is Queen O.’

“ ‘Oh!’ says Larry, in surprise, and not meaning to echo the commander. But they all smiled, gratified-like, as if you couldn’t say O too often to please them.

“ ‘Every one of us has an O in his name,’ explained the friendly Flop. ‘Top, Crop, Mop,

Flop, Hop, and so on. Nod, Clod, Rod, Pod, and so on. Wog, Trog, Sog, Bog, and so on. Hot, Lot, Pot, Shot, Dot, Not, and so — ’

“ ‘ That’ll do ! ’ interrupted Top, crossly. ‘ We didn’t ask *you* for a song. Go on with the song, mortal boy ! ’

“ Larry, cudgelling his brains for O’s, sang this verse :

“ Oh, there’s o-only one for us—
One most lovely Queen-O.
Bow, immortals, look and bow
To the loveliest ever seen-o ! ”

“ ‘ What bosh ! ’ muttered Larry, under his breath. But the Little Good People were fairly wild with delight.

“ ‘ Hurroh, hurroh for the song-boy ! ’ they cried. ‘ One more verse, only one more, and we’ll let you go ! ’

“ And Larry could hardly keep from laughing as he sang the last verse, so silly he thought it :

“ Queen O, queen, oh, Queen O, queen, oh,
Welcome, welcome to your court !
Well, oh, well, oh, well, oh, well,
Welcome to the Fairy Fort ! ”

“ ‘ Hurro-o-o-oh ! ’ cried Crop and Mop, the messenger fairies, who had just returned from the upper world. ‘ That’s a fine O-sy song. And we’ve brought good news. The other song-boy is well again. ’

“ Then it was Larry’s turn to give a hurroh, but not being so fond o’ the O’s, what he said was a common ‘ hurrah ! ’

“ All of a sudden the Little Good People were mightily disturbed, for there was a quick flash o’ light at the intrance, and a very dainty fairyman flew down into the fort. As he shook perfume from his curls, he called out :

“ ‘ Here am I, Fop, the courier o’ the queen ! Make room ! Room for the great Queen O ! ’

“ The crowd o’ fairyman all scampered off to the throne-court and left Larry alone. So ’twas that he saw the fairy queen, a sight never before given to mortal eyes, — and not much room she needed for her greatness, he thought, for she was hardly so tall as a silver fork. Down she came in her litle pearl chariot drawn by six green grasshoppers, harnessed with gold chains. Larry couldn’t but say she was rare-beautiful, though. Her dress was like a veil o’ mist, only ’twas the color of young leaves in April. And her head was crowned with a crown of emeralds, while her eyes were like two more o’ the green gems, and her hair — oh ! her hair was as gold as the harp on the flag o’ Erin.

“ Larry stared at her as she whirled past him. She turned her cruel-bright green eyes and saw him, and he thought she must be angry, as he

caught her hissing words. 'A mortal in my sight! Pre-sumption!'

"So what did he do but run to the gate o' the fort and climb up to the world! He was none too soon, for the fort snapped together when he was barely out of it, and never, never was Larry able to find the entrance again to show it to any one.

"But he heard his own O-sy song in chorus many's the time after, when he'd put his ear to the ground anear a fairy fort, though no one else could hear a sound at all, at all. Ah, then, 'twas certain the Little Good People had put a spell o' magic on him. For never after that day was Larry known to tormint a living creature, but was all gentleness, even in his fun.

"Austin began to get strangely strong in the body as soon as he recovered from the fright Larry had given him in the graveyard, but 'twas odd that he could never make po'try any more. The gift went over entirely to Larry. And it was Austin that when he grew up got to be a dealer in cattle, and a rich, rich man.

"Larry went away from Emly with a gentleman who took him to the city of Limerick. When he was gone so long that people had nearly forgotten him, sure Austin got a book from him, — a printed book, with every word in it made up by Larry. And, by the same token, the covers

were green, and the pages had many an O in them. I saw the book myself, but the O-sy song o' the Little Good People wasn't in it. 'Twas all stories."

We gazed dreamily into the fire.

"Was this story in Larry's book?" asked Frank.

"No, no," said Nana. "This is a true story."

"True for you," said Frank, laughing. "But, Nana, I think your gifted Larry began to romance early in life."

"Early he died, too, poor lad. 'Twas said he'd travelled the wide world over, even as far as Rome and the Holy Land. But he wasn't thirty when they brought him home and buried him in Emly churchyard, anear the fairy fort. And the big-wigs in Dublin said he was a Keltic janius, and what did they do but put a monnymment over him, a fine monnymment, and never one at all was put over Austin when he died, though he was a rich, rich man."

Nana sighed quite cheerfully as she ended her story thus, in true Irish style, at the very gates of eternity. I was eleven, but "only a girl," and my echoing sigh was dismally sentimental. But Frank laughed merrily, and pointed to Brose and Nellie, who had fallen asleep one on each side

of Nana, with their curls intermingled in her white apron.

“The Little Good People!” said our family tease. “There’s a ‘monnymment’ to Nana’s story!”

Nana said she’d never let him into her stories again. But she did, again and again. The teaser was a coxer, too, and I think, in her heart of hearts, Nana liked him better than she liked any of her less mischievous charges. As wise Brose would say, “It’s the way of the women.”

CHAPTER XVI.

ONE OF A THOUSAND

I'M afraid we tormented the Student sometimes. We thought that his chief business in life should be that of a teller of tales for our entertainment. He had other views himself, and I often wondered why he did not attempt to escape our importunities. But he was patient with us; he never forgot that we were fatherless, motherless, lonely little children, and that our hunger for stories had a very real reason in our half-empty, unchildish childhood which we strove to fill with the dramas of other lives, richer in love than our own.

"You're always going to Washington with Grandpapa," I complained one day. "And what do you do there?"

"We don't interview any Congressmen, I assure you, and we neglect the President shamefully," he answered, looking up from his book for a moment.

"No, indeed; and I'm very sure Grandpapa

never even calls on our cousin, Mrs. Campion, who'd be so glad to see him, or to see any of us," I continued, dolefully. "But what do you do in Washington?"

"We devour the libraries and decimate the book-stalls. You see, we come home with trophies. This volume," holding up a brown and yellow ragged book, "this volume is a treasure captured by your grandfather at the sale of the Bellaire collection. It was printed on the first press set up in India, but the matter of which it is composed is some two thousand years older than the invention of printing."

"Any stories in it?"

"There are stories in everything."

"But —"

"I tell you what I'll do. If you'll be very good, and let me study for awhile, I'll tell you an East Indian story after tea to-night."

"Out of that book?"

"Not exactly; this is a learned dissertation on the attributes of the Hindu deities. Honor bright, I've translated a real Sanskrit story for the special benefit of the little Storeys of the Story-Book House!"

And here it is, as he transcribed it for us from the original Hindustani, its Oriental quaintness toned down in its passage through our Student's Celtic mind.

THE WISEMAN OF STORIES

Once upon a time, and a long time ago it was, there reigned in India a king called Dab Selim. You must understand that no ruler, however sagacious, can get along without advisers. Our President has his Cabinet, and when he is puzzled about some great national question he asks the advice of Secretary This or Secretary That. The President and his Cabinet officers know that consultation is an excellent plan for clearing away national cobwebs.

Now King Dab Selim wouldn't have a Cabinet; he scorned advice given as advice; he liked to think that he was wiser as well as more powerful than all the princes and peoples of the Orient. Arrogantly he ranked himself so far above his subjects that, if one of them, even the noblest Rajput of them all, should dare, however mildly, to offer advice, Dab Selim would instantly order his decapitation. So those who liked to keep head and shoulders conjoined either preserved discreet silence or showered fulsome praise upon the deeds of their haughty monarch.

Yet was his High-and Mightiness sad. You see, people are not made happy by getting their own way in everything. Dab Selim was a monstrous tyrant, but he was no fool. He could not help thinking after he had done some tyrannical

mischievous, "Was that wholly wise? If I had reflected upon every side of the question, should I have been so hasty? Perhaps I should not have burned that village; perhaps I might have spared the young Rajah — perhaps! What have I gained by the destruction of life and property? What have I lost?"

Once after thus meditating he cried aloud, "Oh, that Ganesa, the god of wisdom, would send Narada to counsel me!"

For, you see, poor-rich Dab Selim was only a heathen, after all. He lived long before Christ came to redeem the world, long, long before the False Prophet introduced the mix-max of Islam to the credulous Orient. King Dab Selim believed in great Brahm, who sprang from the sacred egg of gold; in Indra, the rain god; in Veruna, the sky god; in Agni, the fire deity; in Siva, the destroyer; in Vishnu, who in three steps could traverse the world; in Ushas, the god of dawn; in Vayu, the wind god; in Kubera, the god of wrath; in Skanda, the war god; in Ganesa, the god of wisdom, and Narada, his messenger, and in all the rest of the thirty-three Hindu deities, who were "eleven in sky, eleven in mid-air, eleven upon earth."

When the monarch soliloquized, neither fair-featured chief nor swart servitor durst make response.

Yet King Dab Selim barely had uttered his wish when, as it were, from the ground there appeared before him a tall, gaunt figure clad in spotless linen.

“Obeisance to the mighty Dab Selim, Lord of the East, Brother of the Sun and Moon, Light of the World!” So spoke the apparition, bowing at the same time in the prostrate fashion of the Orient.

“Thou art — ?”

“Thy servant is called Bidpai. Come I from my retreat in the forest because I was bidden by Narada, the sage, who said unto me, ‘The King Dab Selim hath need of thee.’”

He paused. Again Dab Selim fixed his imperious eyes upon the stranger; again he said, and with new insistence, “Thou art — ?”

“I am thy servant. A high-caste Brahman am I, twice born — instructed a hundredfold. I have been priest and philosopher, poet and historian. The language of bird, of beast, of insect, of little brook and mighty river, of the grass flower and the mountain tree, of the winds and the rocks — lo, King! all this varied speech can I translate. Yet am I content with my dinner of herbs in my little hut among the trees at the edge of the sandwastes. I have given thee the message given unto me by Narada — the messenger of wisdom. Hast

thou need of thy servant or hath the deity played me false? ”

Wonderingly Dab Selim scrutinized the scholastic of the wilderness — eagerly he drank in his testimony. We are wiser than the ancient potentate, of course, for we know very well that Bidpai was but playing a game of diplomacy with his king. Yet there is good-natured diplomacy as well as mischievous, and the wiles of the Brahman philosopher were of good intent. Bidpai had heard many and grievous complaints of the king. Dab Selim was a tyrant, an oppressor, a violator of rights, for all that he believed himself divine. Should some one venture to say to him, “ Great King, if you would deign to do thus and so, what happiness you might confer on your people! ” perhaps the monarch might see himself in all his odiousness, but more likely he would order the instant execution of the daring adviser. Bidpai the Wiseman had so affectionate a regard for his own head that he did not care to lose it for a tyrant’s whim. Hence his plan.

Did he understand the language of all things animate and inanimate? Most certainly. All poets are gifted thus. And had Narada, the sage divinity, commanded Bidpai to wait upon the king? Ah, that I do not care to affirm! The suggestion was an inspiration, certainly, and doubtless a high-caste Brahman of the ancient

cult believed that every wise inspiration was a direct communication from Narada, the deified messenger of wisdom. Even yet Brahmanism is of all pagan systems the most poetic, the most spiritual. In those early days it was a sort of refined nature worship, free from the repulsive cruelties which were to be formulated by its more modern devotees.

Bidpai the Wiseman was a fine type of the high-caste Brahman of the ancient times. His forehead was lofty and of good breadth, his deep-set black eyes were amazingly soft, and bright as the eyes of a happy child. You are not to suppose that he was at all like the yellow-skinned, low-caste Hindus whom you may have seen performing jugglery on the stage. No; Bidpai's skin was like ivory; it was as white as his even, shining teeth.

Nor was the "twice-born" king darker than his visitor. Dab Selim had the peculiarly white complexion, the regular features, and deep dark eyes of the noble Aryan race. But his lips were thin with merciless purpose, his brow furrowed by haunting afterthought, his eyes hardened in wilful selfishness and solitary discontent. The great king bestowed an approving glance upon Bidpai's simple dress. His own costume was heavy with bullion, encrusted with gems. The royal robes were, in sooth, a woful weight to

bear. Wearily the king lifted his arms, and his massive gold bracelets clanked against the gold of the throne pillars. Great diamonds and rubies flashed on Dab Selim's slender fingers; scaly golden serpents with ruby eyes were twisted about his bare ankles.

The monarch's scrutiny was favorable to Bidpai. Dab Selim saluted the philosopher reverently.

"Be seated, messenger of the messenger of wisdom," he said. "I am sad at heart, and if thou canst comfort me, truly I have need of thee, O man of wise words."

"What doth the king need?" asked Bidpai. "Wealth? Nay, his very fingers are afire with precious substance. Power? He holds a nation in the hollow of his hand. Love? His mother lives, his wife is fair, his babes are comely. Wealth, power, love —"

Lowly the great king spoke. "I am master of all these, yea, master even of mother and of wife. Bidpai, I have heard of friendship — of friendship between man and man, strong enough to bind weakness, potent to amend error, fruitful in counsel, loyal, tender, enduring unto death. Tell me — wise Brahman, is there so veritable a treasure to be found in all India?"

"May the king have a friend?" counter-queried the Wiseman, cunningly. "Nay, for

unless the king should stoop to meet friendship, who would dare to raise himself to the level of the Brother of the Sun? For friendship is equality. Yea, there is friendship among the lowly, even among the beasts. Wouldst thou have a story, my king? ”

“ Canst thou find a new tale for every day? ” asked Dab Selim, eagerly.

“ For every hour of every day. My fellow creatures, my birds, my flowers, have told their secrets to me; the pebble on the river-bank and the grain of millet in the sower’s hand have poured their stories into my ears. So if the king will deign to listen I can tell him a thousand thousand tales.”

“ Tell me a tale of friendship,” said the friendless king.

So Bidpai told the first of his thousand thousand tales, “ The Story of the Three Friends,” and, in telling it, gained the first friendship of the one-time tyrant of India.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE THREE FRIENDS

IN the land of Sakawind, near the city of Dahir, there was a luxuriant forest abounding in all kinds of wild game. Hither the hunters resorted to try their skill that they might bear home trophies and provisions.

In a many-branched, closely leaved teakwood-tree in the wildwood a Raven had made its home. It happened one morning that the fierce Thug, a cruel hunter, made his way to the foot of the Raven's tree. He bore a long staff and a many-corded net. The Raven trembled. "Alas! this murderer comes to destroy me or some of my neighbors," said the bird to himself. "I must remain as quiet as possible, so that he may not observe me."

Thug, who had not seen the bird of ebon plumage on its lofty perch, stretched his net on the ground and sprinkled grains of millet and rice between the meshes. Then he hid himself in the shrubbery and waited for victims.

Presently the Ring-Dove and her companions soared near.

"We are hungry. Where shall we get our breakfast?" asked the Gray Dove.

"Wait," said the Ring-Dove.

"Why, there's a fine breakfast spread for us!" cried the Brown Dove. "What luck!"

"Come, come, let us eat," cooed one of the White Doves.

"Beware of the too-easy!" warned the Ring-Dove. "Nothing worth having can be had without labor. Rice and millet do not grow in the jungle. Beware! Beware!"

But the Striped Dove and the Speckled Dove and all their companions cooed merrily, "Oh, sermonizer, shall we not take what the dawn-god hath provided? Refuse the good gift if thou wilt, but keep not us from our breakfast!"

So they flew down and began to devour the grain. The Ring-Dove suspected a snare, though she could see nothing, for the net was woven of hemp as green as the jungle grass. Her doubts took away her appetite; still, not wishing to desert her companions, she flew down beside them.

Then the fierce huntsman was glad. Long had he desired to possess the Ring-Dove, and now he had her and a whole flock of her companions. He pulled a cord, and instantly all the feeding

birds were gathered, ignominiously bagged into the close net.

"A good morning's work!" cried the hunter, gleefully, as he tied the cord. Then, like the cruel ruffian that he was, he sat down under a tree to enjoy the distress of the captives.

"How they struggle!" he cried. "How frightened they are! They have good reason, too. I shall have the heads of most of them wrung off before night. What fun!"

They understood very well what he said, but he knew nothing of their language. The Ring-Dove excepted, all the victims bewailed their situation.

"Oh, if we had but taken your advice!" they moaned. "Ah, that we had recollected that the Ring-Dove's counsel has ever been wise!"

"Recollect it now, then," said the Ring-Dove. "I do not reproach you; your punishment is reproach enough. We are in trouble; yes, but no one ever got out of difficulty by grumbling about it. Now, friends, stop your useless moaning and let us consider what we must do to be free."

"Freedom! freedom!" cried the others, and they all began to struggle again, this way and that, each striving to free himself. They only flopped the net from side to side, and made the cruel Thug laugh at their fruitless efforts.

“Cease that useless, disunited struggle and list to me!” commanded the Ring-Dove, so sternly that the fluttered captives subsided at once. “We are friends, are we not? If we are, we should work for one another, not each for himself. Selfishness always defeats its own object. Work together, friends, each for all, all for each, with one united purpose and one undivided strength. Now, all together! Upward! Mount!”

Before the astonished hunter could spring to his feet he saw the net soar into the air like one great bird.

“What? this is no less than magic!” he exclaimed. “Have all the birds been transformed into one of giant strength? Am I to be so cheated of my prey? No, no!”

So Thug rose and ran along under the slowly flying net. The Raven, who was much interested, flew after the doves and overheard what they had to say.

“The hunter follows us,” remarked the Ring-Dove. “Let us return to the forest and elude his pursuit.”

They flew in among the trees, and Thug soon lost sight of them. Not so the Raven, who, unseen by the worried huntsman, followed the netted birds from tree to tree. When they were safe from their pursuer, the Ring-Dove gave the

signal, and the wearied birds sank to the ground to rest.

"Now we are in just as sad a plight as ever," complained the Speckled Dove. "We've escaped the hunter, but we are still imprisoned."

"Have you a friend?" queried the Ring-Dove, shortly — "one that can help us to be free?"

"N-no, not exactly that," said the Speckled Dove. And then more boastingly, "Of course I have plenty of friends perfectly willing to help me if they could. But how can I ask Madam Heron or Sir Kingfisher to extricate a dozen foolish doves from the net of Thug?"

"A real friend likes to be asked to do a good turn for his friend," declared the Ring-Dove. "And a real friend is able to help because he is willing. Have you such a friend?" addressing the Brown Dove, who meekly confessed that she wished she could say she had. Some of the others, like the Speckled Dove, boasted of their elegant acquaintances. But the Ring-Dove's test of helpfulness seemed to leave them all friendless. This angered the Gray Dove.

"You appear to blame us for having no powerful friends. Where are your own? Will Man help you, or Lion or Cheetah or Jackal or Hyena?"

"Or Elephant or Peacock?" added Speckled Dove, sarcastically.

"I have no friendship with the enemies of my race nor with selfish, flaunting birds," said Ring-Dove, quietly. "Yet have I friends, O doubting Doves! Yea, there is a great brown Elephant who is my friend when I need his service. I have a Man friend, too. And in a certain burrow is a very good friend of mine who will help me now — a little brown Field Mouse."

At this the others laughed. "That's a famous kind of friend to have!" sneered Speckled Dove. "I foresee that we shall remain in this net to starve until a jungle beast comes to make a meal of us."

"Your foresight is short sight," retorted Ring-Dove. "Now all who are willing to be freed make another effort. Upward! Mount!"

Again the netted cage of doves soared high; again the Raven followed. Far from the road, in the corner of the parched field, the net was lowered.

"Mousie! Mousie!" called the Ring-Dove, softly.

From the very cellar of a burrowed hole issued a thin little voice:

"Who wants me?"

"A friend in distress," replied Ring-Dove.

"That summons me," said Field Mouse, and in an instant his bright little eyes and sharp nose were visible at the door of the burrow.

“Why, my dear friend Ring-Dove, is it you thus ensnared? Ah, let me cut the cords that bind you, for I suffer until you are free.”

So saying, the faithful little friend would have gnawed the net which bound Ring-Dove's feet had not that noble bird interposed.

“Not so, Field Mouse. I pray you, as you love me, help my companions first.”

“And why?”

“Because a Man or a Tiger might pass this way and interrupt your work. Or if you freed me first you might grow weary before you had liberated my companions. I know you will never weary so long as I, your friend, remain in the net. Therefore, leave me until the last.”

“Noble Ring-Dove! who could help loving thee!” cried Field Mouse, as he set to work diligently to sever the cords with his sharp little teeth-saw.

All the doves, even to selfish, grumbling Speckled Dove, pleaded with Ring-Dove to be allowed to remain until last, but their leader was firm.

And the Doves one and another said:

“Thank you, good Field Mouse, for freeing us! Thank you, dearest Ring-Dove, for all your wise kindness! We shall never cease to love you for it; may we prove our love by trying to be like you in pure unselfishness!”

So they all flew away except Ring-Dove, who remained to chat with her old friend. Suddenly the observant Raven swooped down, and Field Mouse turned to flee down its narrow burrow.

“Nay do not go,” pleaded the Raven. “Fear me not. See, I will retreat to the hedge. I wish to be admitted to your noble friendship, wise Ring-Dove, loyal Mouse. It was near my own teakwood-tree that cruel Thug spread his net. Lo, I saw the capture and the escape, and followed to see the liberation. I am rejoiced to know the value of real friendship. Will you have me for your friend?”

Field Mouse, who had retreated to his burrow, poked his cautious nose out just a little way and said, “Raven, you are my natural enemy. Your kind devour my kind. Would not such friendship be unnatural?”

“Nay, if I find my enemy noble, he is no longer my enemy,” declared Raven. “What you have done for Ring-Dove endears you to me. I swear to protect you always, to harm you never. Ring-Dove, do you believe me to be sincere?”

“I have heard that you are a noble Raven,” said Ring-Dove. “Do not fear him, friend Mouse. As to admitting him to friendship, that you must decide for yourself. I am slow to make friends, and you —”

She paused in horror. Field Mouse had just

left the hole when a snake glided toward him. Ring-Dove and Raven were safe on the hedge, and Raven uttered a warning note. Both birds expected to see Field Mouse retreating to his burrow. But he stood stock-still. The snake's glance was fastened on him; its sinuous body writhed nearer and nearer.

"Alas! poor Mousie is held by the snake-charm!" cried Ring-Dove.

Instantly, and yet with a thought as precipitate, Raven flew to the neck of the snake. You might think that snakes are all neck. I assure you that such is not the case. Raven knew very well what he was about. He placed himself so that neither the poisonous head could dart venom upon him nor the strangling body suffocate him in its folds. The upper neck is a small part of the snake; it is, however, the only "safe" part.

Still, Raven was in a dangerous situation. The whip-like tail could twist around, strike him off, and then coil him in deadly embrace. He knew he had to measure his movements — he watched Mousie anxiously. The irritated serpent lifted its head — its mortally fascinating eyes left Field Mouse, who, relieved of the charm, scampered swiftly to the safety of his burrow.

Raven promptly lifted himself into the air, croaking derisively as he went. Ring-Dove

joined him in his flight, and they alighted on a near-by tamarisk.

"Friend of my friend, be my friend!" said Ring-Dove, softly.

"Most heartily will I!" agreed Raven. "Long live the Three Friends; may their affection become a proverb of true friendship!"

"Friendship — it is the greatest safeguard in life!" said Ring-Dove. "Now, if Field Mouse had not been my friend, I should not be free to-day. If you had not so nobly interposed your friendship in behalf of Mousie, he must have been swallowed by that hideous krait."

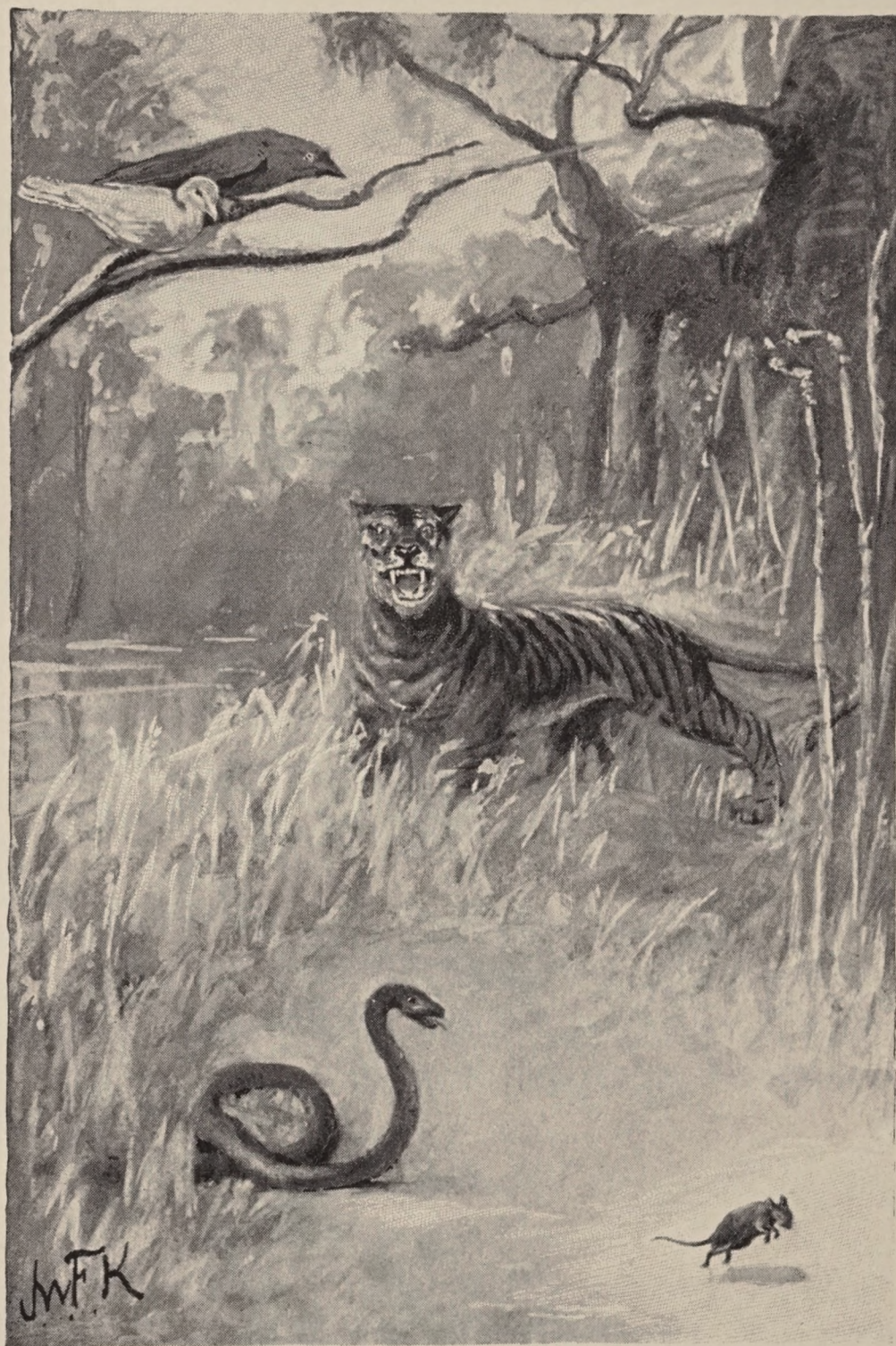
"And if we had not known your nobility of nature, dear Ring-Dove, neither of us could have been prompted to do what we did. Your unselfishness, your wisdom —"

Shy Ring-Dove was confused with all this praise. She interrupted, suddenly:

"Look, look! what is that?"

A Tiger! A long, sleek, hungry fellow. Like a great cat he stole noiselessly up behind the krait-snake, who, quivering with defeated greed, blind with the anger of deprivation, did not perceive the approaching enemy.

What Raven knew of the snake's weak point, Tiger knew also. In an instant he had fastened his fangs in the unprotected neck. The snake struggled vainly all along its length and vainly



“LIKE A GREAT CAT HE STOLE NOISELESSLY UP
BEHIND THE KRAIT - SNAKE.”

tried to twist its head and dart its poison upon the foe. But Tiger had the advantage; the contest was brief and deadly. Within a few minutes the serpent lay lifeless, and the hungry tiger began to devour the body.

"That is a dreadful sight!" said Ring-Dove, shuddering.

"Wait; you will see something more. That great foolish cat does not know that a krait-snake is death-in-death as well as death-in-life. Ah, my friend, enmity is a fearful thing! Even death does not stop the work of a foe. Look!" cried the Raven.

Tiger threw himself on the ground and rolled convulsively, while he uttered howls of agony.

"He has slain his enemy and the death is his own; he has eaten the poison of hatred," continued Raven.

When the great velvety body of Tiger was stretched in death beside the remains of his mortal foe, big black Raven and little pearly Ring-Dove left their perch and flew down to the abode of tiny Field Mouse.

"All is safe, Mousie!" called Ring-Dove. "Come out and thank your new friend."

"I hope to thank him in service rather than in words, else shall I be no true friend," said Field Mouse. "Ah, what work is this? Did Snake kill Tiger or Tiger slay Snake?"

"Hate killed both," replied Ring-Dove. "May hatred never come to us, dear friends!"

"It shall never come among us," declared Raven. "Outside hatred cannot harm us while loving unity protects us. No other strength, no other wisdom, is so strong and so wise as faithful friendship."

And the Three Friends were faithful unto death.

"That is but one of the thousand thousand tales told by Bidpai the Wiseman to Dab Selim the King," concluded the Student.

"Too much moral to it," criticized Frank.

"Why, I haven't translated one-half of its maxims," said the Student. "The Orientals like that sort of thing. Their professional story-tellers put all manner of philosophy into their tales."

"Did the story make the king gooder?" demanded Brose.

"To be sure! You see" (addressing Frank) "Brose is like an East Indian; he wants the application of the story. Yes, indeed, Master Brose, the story-teller made the king 'gooder.' He had so many stories to tell, and the monarch was so anxious to hear them all, that the Wiseman had to live in the palace, so that Dab Selim could summon him at any hour, day or night. Thus it came to pass that Bidpai the Wiseman

left his lonely hermitage and took up his abode with the capricious tyrant. Every day he told new tales to Dab Selim, and day by day the king honored him more. Now you will have guessed that clever Bidpai was not one to lose an opportunity of doing good. No; there was in each new story some wise counsel for King Dab Selim. The tyrant, listening eagerly to the tale-teller, swallowed the advice with the story and unconsciously profited thereby. Gradually his manner changed; he began to treat his mother and his wife as equals and to show some degree of human feeling for his amazed subjects.

“To Bidpai he offered wealth and honors, which the philosopher gently refused.

“‘What shall I give you, then, most unworldly Wiseman?’ asked King Dab Selim.

“‘The king has honored me with his friendship. That is my all-sufficient recompense,’ replied Bidpai. But he had a greater reward. Whenever the Wiseman walked abroad the people taught their children to bow before their friend. ‘He hath softened the hard heart of the king; we need no longer live in fear. Thrice honored be Bidpai the Wise!’”

CHAPTER XVIII.

AN IRISH GHOST STORY

IN the Story-Book House the schoolroom opens from the nursery. Both are large, lofty rooms, with tall windows, wide window-seats and capacious hearths. The Story-Book House is built on a generous scale, like an English manor, and, indeed, the Storeys, from generation to generation, have preserved many of the ancestral customs from over the sea. We were not reared in American fashion; by Grandpapa's orders we were kept simply dressed, our food was plain and wholesome, and we were never permitted to have our meals in the great oak-walled dining-room, in which Washington, Jefferson, Lafayette, and Carroll of Carrollton had dined with Great-Great-Grandpapa Storey, and where Grandpapa so often sat at the head of the table in solemn, solitary state.

The schoolroom was bright and cheerful, fitted up with modern maps, walnut bookcases, and the light bamboo book-shelves which papa had

brought from Japan. The study-table was the only antique in the room, a mahogany monster, dating from Colonial times, its massive edges and ponderous legs cut and scratched by penknives in the mischievous fingers of many a dead-and-gone boy of the Story-Book House; its cover renewed every ten years or so when islands of black ink had almost hidden the original sea of bright green baize. We liked our schoolroom, but we loved the old nursery, with its comfortable chairs and its big downy sofa, and the round table where our simple meals were served by Nana. Nana's room adjoined the nursery, and my old room was next to hers. Frank and Brose slept at the other side of the house, in a room just above Grand-papa's, — papa's own bedroom during his boyhood.

One afternoon in early May, just when our lessons for the day were ended, and when we were all eager to get out to see the fresh grass and the blossoming trees, and to hear the twittering of the song-birds, the sky grew overcast, and presently the clouds sent down the patter of steady rain, so discouraging to our hopes of a speedy clearing-up. Brose, with his little nose flattened against the window, pronounced the weather "socking wet." Nellie began to cry.

"Me 'ont yike a wain!" moaned our baby.

"Don't blame you, Babe," said Frank, patting her little dimpled hands, "I'm tired of it myself."

"I don't get tired o' the rain twull God gets tired of sending it," announced Master Brose, grandly.

"No? Isn't our Ambrose a nice little boy?" Frank is always sarcastic when he's cross.

I was glad when the door of the corridor opened and Nana came in. Babe flew to her at once. Brose pushed her old chair in place, next to his own. A fire burned in the wide grate, for there was still a chill in the air. What a cosy little semicircle we formed around the old brass fender! And how well Nana knew what we wanted!

"It's a rainy day, children," she said.

"Oh, yes, Nana!" we cried. "It's just a bee-yutiful day for a story."

"A ghostus 'tory," said Brose.

From her capacious "Irish pocket," Nana drew forth a ball of scarlet yarn and began to knit. This was a sure sign that a story was coming, so we settled ourselves comfy to listen.

"Once upon a time," began Nana, "there was a fine young gentleman in the old country, and he loved a beautiful young lady. His name was Lord Gerald, and her name was Lady Grace. She lived over the water in England, and she was as fair as he was handsome, and they were both

as good as gold. He had a grand estate with a big, big park round about it, and a lovely garden, and lots and lots of marble statuary. Everywhere you'd go you'd see Adams and Eves, and Daniel O'Connells, and Vanuses, and Shakespeares, and Juke of Wellingtons, and all kinds of janiuses." Nana paused, quite out of breath with her catalogue of "Vanuses" and "janiuses," and talky Brose improved the chance to ask:

"But what was the man's last name, Nana?"

"Oh, sure, he wasn't a man at all, dear; 'tis a gentleman he was, and his full name was Lord Gerald Tracy Fitzgerald — a good old name and a true one. Well, anyway, in his grandfather's time, the estate run down. 'Twasn't in the old man to keep a tight hold of his money, and so he got as poor as a church mouse, however poor that is.

"The old lord had two sons; the one that became Lord Gerald's father was what they call a younger son, and however little there was for his brother in the place, sure, there'd be less for him. So what did he do but go off to America as plain Mr. Fitzgerald. Plain in name only, you know, for he had all the good looks of the Fitzgeralds, and all the breeding of an Irish gentleman, with a merry tongue of his own. It's no wonder the nicest and richest young lady in New York fell in love with him, but what was

worse, didn't his own blue eyes just adore her brown ones, and didn't he think the American lady the most beautiful young lady in the world?

"Ah, but he was that proud, that just because he had no money, he wouldn't think of asking her what she was fairly dying to have him ask! And what did he do but leave New York, and go out West somewhere, and make a fortune? Not much of a fortune was it compared to hers, but, sure, 'twas enough to make him feel like the gentleman that he was. And he went back to her, and she just pining away for the sight of him; and he asked her to marry him.

"You may be sure they had the finest wedding ever seen in New York. However, hardly had they got home from the church when a message was handed to him that had been going astray for ever and ever so long. And when he read it he knew his brother was dead three months back, and now himself was the heir to the lordship and the lands, and had to go home to Ireland to his father. Then he told his bride and her father that he was the future Lord Fitzgerald. And sure, if they were proud of him before, it's prouder they were then.

"Well, to make a long story short, they sailed away to Ireland, and it's a grand welcome they got; and the old lord, who was very poetical, said his son's wife was an American lily — for

Lilian was her name — and he called her Lily-flower. And it's proud and happy he was when he held in his arms his little grandson, Gerald, named for himself. Ah, then, it's the happy home that was there! The sweet American Lily was that soothed with joy — how could she know that 'twas to be so short-lived? Many and many a fair bride had the Fitzgerald heirs in the years ago, and happy, happy were the sweet creatures, — but — but nearly every one of them died young. It looked as if death, being jealous-like of so much happiness, followed them that married the Fitzgeralds."

Here Master Brose interrupted the story. Indeed we were wondering why he had been so long silent.

"Nana," he said, gravely, "I won't marry no Fitzgerald."

"That's right, darling," said Nana, joining in the laugh raised at the expense of this very young bachelor. "Well, anyhow, to be on with my story, all the joy was soon enough turned to wailing. The beautiful American Lily faded and died, and her young husband was like one distracted. And, sure, less than six months after she was laid away, didn't his crushed and faithful heart follow her, leaving the old lord alone in the world with an orphan baby.

"Ah! but the love he poured over that boy

as the years went on, and the old gentleman that had never taken care of money became almost a miser for the grandson's sake. He managed his estate himself, and got the rents all in proper, and put a stop to all waste, so that when he died the place was in grand trim, and he had left a little money to the boy — besides the fine American fortune the parents left.

“ Ah, but things can't happen in a minute, and it took eighteen years for the old lord to do all this, and it's nineteen years old was the lad when the grandfather died. Eh, to be sure, he must have grieved sore for the kind old lord that had been like father and mother to him.

“ But, after all, sure, youth is young, and six years after, don't we find Lord Gerald Fitzgerald, at the age of twenty-five, madly in love with the Lady Grace.”

“ We do, we do,” said Frank, “ and it's nearly six years since you spoke of Lady Grace, Nana.”

Nana smiled and shook her head. “ I'm afraid I'm but a roundabout story-teller,” she said, “ but whatever way it comes into my head, that's the way I must tell it.”

The continued rain darkened the already fading day. Nana could no longer see to set her stitches properly, so she put away the knitting. Baby Nell had fallen asleep with her golden head resting

against my knee. Nana placed her on the sofa, and covered her with a shawl.

Meanwhile Frank was stirring up the fire, and its glow shone upon our faces.

"I'm glad it isn't a really ghostus 'tory," said Brose, looking behind him; "it's too dark over there."

"Ah, but 'tis a ghost story," Nana assured him, as she resumed her place. "Sure, I didn't come to that part yet."

"Go on, Nana," said I, "Brose asked for a ghost story."

"'Twas daylight then," whimpered Brose. "I'm not afraid for myself, but Babe is over there in the dark alone."

"Shall I put you with her for company?" said Frank, rising; but Brose shrank away, crying, "Oh, Frank, I'm a-scared my own self, too!"

This admission pleased Frank so much that he placed Brose's chair between his own and mine, so that the little fellow might feel safe.

"Well, to come back to Lord Gerald," resumed Nana, "he was as wild for the lovely Lady Grace as his father had been for the fair American Lily, — and he being so noble and rich and handsome, how could her people, grand though they were, say no to him?"

"So they were married, and he brought her home to Ireland, a wife of eighteen. Ah, but

she was a beauty! When they came up the road to Mount Tracy, sure, the people lined the hedges to get a look at them, and to wish long life to them, for Lord Gerald was beloved by all his tenants, he being the best landlord in all Ireland. Ah, but when they saw his bride, with her lovely waving hair as yellow as the sunlight, and her skin as white as milk, with just a posy blush coming over it when they cheered, and her kind eyes beaming, sure, the country people shouted themselves hoarse, and no wonder, for she looked like an angel.

“ They were as happy as the angels, those two, and them that used to praise Lord Gerald before, lost sight of him when they began to speak of her ladyship. There wasn’t a sick or a poor person for miles around that she didn’t comfort. Ah, then, she was so full of her own happiness that she didn’t want any one to have sorrow. But who can ward off sorrow from themselves?

“ They’d been married nearly three months, when one day Lord Gerald was called away on business. He left on an early morning train, so that he could get back before night. But toward evening a storm rose, and the rain poured and the wind howled. ’Twas then Lady Grace began to get uneasy. My own second cousin, Alice Moloney, was her ladyship’s maid, and ’twas from her I got the story.

“ ’Twas nigh eight o’clock in the evening. The wind-storm was down, but the rain still poured in torrents. The groom had gone early to the station with the master’s horse, and Alice said they were only waiting for the rain to stop, but that didn’t quiet Lady Grace, and she kept on fretting till she had a headache. Alice offered to brush her hair, thinking ’twould ease the pain. She was a great comfort, was Alice.

“ Lady Grace lay back in the dressing-chair while the girl onpinned the yellow braids and let loose the silky-fine hair. They were anear the window, so that her ladyship could hear the trampling of hoofs which would speak Lord Gerald’s return.

“ Alice brushed away with firm and gentle strokes, but her mistress grew oneasier and oneasier. ‘Thank you, Alice; it’s very soothing. But I’m nervous — so nervous! I have some sense of coming danger: I feel that there is something wrong — Hark! what is that?’

“ For above all the noise of pouring rain rose the saddest, most onearthly wail, beginning low and rising to a shriek, then falling again into a long-drawn moan.

“ Alice turned white as a sheet, and the brush fell from her trembling fingers. Ah, then, well she knew the meaning of that awful sound. It

was the wail of the *banshee* that always came to foretell death.

“ ‘What is it?’ cried Lady Grace. ‘Speak, girl: I’m nearly frantic!’

“ ‘Ah,’ said Alice, stooping to pick up the brush, and trying to speak quiet-like, ‘sure, it’s only a gust of wind blowing through the trees, my lady.’

“ As if to contradict her, the wailing sound rose again, and again died away in a moan.

“ ‘It is a human voice!’ cried Lady Grace, starting up. ‘Alice, I must see who is in distress this night!’

“ Alice laid hands on her. ‘Ah, then, my lady, it’s Winnie, the kitchen-maid, that’s lost her mother, and she do be grieving for —’

“ Here the oneearthly wail rose again, this time seeming to come from just outside the casement. Lady Grace broke away from her maid’s clasp, and rushed to the window. Alice followed her.

“ Then they saw a tall figure, all in white, with long hair streaming in the rain, and with its thin arms lifted up and waving, while the terrible moaning sound came from its lips. Hardly had the echo died away when the ghostly figure vanished.

“ Alice was nearly palsied with terror. Lady Grace caught her by the arm. ‘Who was that

woman, and where did she go?' demanded the mistress.

"Then Alice faltered out, 'Oh, my lady, my lady, 'twas the *banshee* — the *banshee* of the Fitzgeralds, and death will come to this house the night!'

"Ah, then, if Lady Grace was nervous before, sure, she got as calm and strong as could be when she heard what the maid had to say.

" 'I've heard of that superstition before,' she said, 'I know what you mean. Lord Gerald is away from home. I will show that it's all nonsense. Come now, fasten up my hair, and let us go to meet Lord Gerald.'

" 'Sure, there isn't a man to drive the carriage; Ulick went to the village, and Barney's gone to meet my lord, — onless your ladyship'd trust the carriage-horses to Thady the gardener, or to one o' the stable-boys?'

" 'No; the horses are too spirited to be driven by unskilled hands. And Beauty, my own saddle-horse, is lame since yesterday. Well, Alice, — we can walk!'

" 'Walk? Walk in all the rain, is it?' asked the astonished Alice.

" 'Pshaw! it is nothing — nothing to this terrible suspense, girl. Oh, make haste!'

"In a few minutes Alice had wrapped her ladyship in a rain-coat, its little hood fastened

over her head. She put an old waterproof cloak on herself. Taking a lantern, they started out, and without telling any one, or saying a word to each other, they walked as fast as they could along the wet road. At last they came to Mona's Cross, where the road forks off in two.

" 'Now, then, which way shall we go, my lady?' asked Alice. 'It's like this: If my lord passed through the village, he'd come by the left-hand way, and if he came straight from the station, he'd take the right-hand road.'

" Lady Grace paused to think. It was the queerest night. Only half an hour before it had been pouring rain, but now the clouds had all cleared away and the moon was shining.

" 'Alice,' said her ladyship, 'it's more than likely that Lord Gerald will come direct from the station; but for fear he'd come the other way, do you take this road, and I'll go by that, and one of us will be sure to meet him.'

" 'Ah, my lady, won't you be afraid to go by yourself?'

" Alice never forgot how this tenderly reared young lady of eighteen looked down the long road. The moon shone full on her face and showed her crinkly yellow hair coming out of the hood, but it showed never a sign of fear in her brave eyes.

" 'I am not afraid, Alice,' she said, and turn-



"SHE CRIED OUT TO THEM TO HALT."

ing, she walked swiftly down the road to the station, leaving the maid to go the other way.

“ Alice had been about twenty minutes on the road, running for very fear, for the wail of the *banshee* was still in her ears, when suddenly she heard the sound of ringing hoofs, and a couple of horsemen clattered up. She cried out to them to halt, and who were they but Lord Gerald and Barney the groom.

“ ‘ Ah, then, is it Alice? ’ cried Barney. ‘ And what brings you out? ’

“ Between her joy at seeing his lordship safe, and her fear for Lady Grace, Alice could hardly speak.

“ ‘ Oh, my lady! my lady! ’ she wailed. ‘ Oh, woe, and was it for her the *banshee* cried? ’

“ Lord Gerald was off his horse quick as a flash of lightning, and in a minute had taken hold of the girl’s trembling hands.

“ ‘ What has happened? ’ he cried. ‘ Tell me at once! ’

“ How Alice made out to tell him the story she never knew, but it seemed scarce three minutes before he was galloping off in the direction of the forked road. One awful cry she heard from him, ‘ The bridge, the bridge! ’

“ ‘ The bridge isn’t safe, Alice, ’ said Barney. ‘ Sure, that’s why we took the long way about, and crossed at the ford — we were warned that

the rain had made the old bridge weaker. God protect her ladyship this night!’

“Then he took the girl up on his horse and followed his master. They reached Mona’s Cross, and turned up the forked road, Lord Gerald away off in advance. Suddenly they heard a cry they thought they never could forget. It was from his lordship.

“When they came up to him, they found him at the edge of the river. The old bridge had fallen at last; all the middle of it had been swept down the river in the rush of the storm. And there stood Lord Gerald on the broken end, and in his hands the little hood of her ladyship’s rain-coat!

“Alice shrieked, ‘Oh, my God! — she’s drowned, — she’s drowned dead!’

“‘Sh!’ whispered Barney, who, looking at his master’s face, saw that it was blue-white with despair. In another moment the young nobleman, flinging his hands above his head like a madman, had plunged into the stream. But if he did, faithful Barney plunged in after him, and with all his strength, dragged him out, and pulled him up on the bank. By this time Alice was like one distracted. There was Barney thrown down utterly exhausted, and there was his lordship without a bit of sense at all, at all.

“‘Alice, alanna,’ gasped Barney, when he

could get his breath, 'do you go over to Delaney's across the field, and tell Pakie to come hither.'

" 'Sure, Driscoll's is nearer,' said Alice.

" 'Ah, but they're a bad lot, and don't they hold spite again his lordship? 'Tisn't to them we should look for help in this sad hour. Let you run to Delaney's, like a good girl.'

" Alice sped across the wet field she knew so well, and in a short time she was running back with Pakie Delaney. The two men lifted the young lord between them and went toward Delaney's, Alice following.

" As they passed Driscoll's, Barney shook his head at the little cottage. There was an old feud between him and Dark Terence, and he was full of mistrust.

" 'It doesn't look likely, and yet something tells me they're to blame for this night's work,' he muttered.

" When they reached Delaney's they forced some whiskey down Lord Gerald's throat, and he came to, raving, and so they put him to bed, and Pakie went off on Barney's horse to get the doctor, while Barney put dry clothes on himself. When the doctor came, he said his lordship's head was struck, and already there was brain fever. Ah, then, that was the long night, but the doctor wouldn't leave him.

" Along toward morning, who came into the

cottage but Sheelah Driscoll, that silent girl that would never go in any one's house. Some used to say that she was a kind of fairy. They were all queer — the Driscolls, but none could say aught against Sheelah, except that there was mystery about her. Small wonder, poor girl, when she was sister to Dark Terence, and living among all that smuggling secrecy.

“At any rate there she was for the first time in Delaney's cottage. She had a shawl over her head, and she came just inside the door.

“‘Alice Moloney,’ said she, as soon as she saw Alice, ‘it's a long night I've been looking for you.’

“‘And what do you want of her, now that you've found her?’ asked Barney, grimly.

“‘It's her mistress wants her, not I,’ returned Sheelah.

“Alice jumped up, and as she did so the cloak flew off her. Sure, 'twas only then they saw her hair all turned gray from that night of terror.

“‘My mistress!’ she cried. ‘Sure, she's drowned dead!’

“‘No,’ said Sheelah, quiet as ever. ‘She's in our house and in my bed, and she wants to go home.’

“Then maybe Barney and Alice didn't fall on their knees to thank God.

"As for Sheelah, she asked the doctor how his lordship was, and says Barney, 'Oyea, but how did you know he was hurt?'

" 'Ah,' says Sheelah, roguish-like, 'don't I know everything?'

" 'Well, if you're a fairy,' says Barney, 'it's the good fairy you've been this night, and the grace of God be with you!'

" 'I thank you, Barney Riordan. 'Tisn't many'll give good wishes to a Driscoll.'

"They went over and brought back Lady Grace. Dark Terence had found her in a swoon beside the broken bridge, and had carried her home to his cottage, where Sheelah had cared for her. Ah, then, glad was her ladyship to see Lord Gerald again, sick and all as he was!

"The Delaneys had to go to another cottage for awhile, as his lordship couldn't be moved, and he lay there three months before he got well.

"For a long time Alice wondered about the *banshee*, until Dark Terence died, when her ladyship told the secret. Terence had great spite against Lord Gerald on account of his lordship's interference with the smuggling, and wasn't he planning to kill him that night in the dark road between the bridge and Mona's Cross. When he found the bridge broken he thought the master had been drowned, especially when he came upon Lady Grace in a dead faint on the bank. Then

he got sorry. When the trouble was all over, Dark Terence repented his wrong ways, and he made a good end, after all.

"And the *banshee*? Ah, who was that but Sheelah Driscoll herself, who was wishing to warn the house against the danger. She was very tall and thin, was Sheelah, and with her long red hair hanging, and the white gown on her, she made a fearsome *banshee*. There wasn't one in the whole barony could give such a cry as her, — 'twas a queer gift, sure, but all the Driscolls were queer.

"Well, children, there isn't much more to tell. Lord Gerald and Lady Grace lived happy ever after, and had a fine family."

"What's a fine family?" asked Brose.

"Fourteen children," answered Frank. "Go on, Nana."

"As for Alice," continued Nana, "Barney and herself were married, and if she had gray hair herself, sure her children's hair was as black as night. And Sheelah Driscoll became Lady Grace's own maid, and was as good and as faithful as Alice herself could be."

"That was a terrible long story," commented Brose. "And 'twas only a make-believe ghostus, after all."

CHAPTER XIX.

KING FRITZ'S GIANTS

"THE year Grandpapa took the Student to Europe" marks an epoch in the records of the Story-Book House. In the first place, the Student was no longer a student, save to us. He was a full-fledged clergyman at last, but he was so overworn with study, that his bishop, mindful of the frail physique and strong mentality of the young ecclesiastic, willingly granted him permission to accompany his good friend, Colonel Calvert Storey, on the health-giving journey across the Atlantic. They departed in June, when Uncle Papa, at Grandpapa's request, took up his residence at Mount Stuart for the summer.

Dear Uncle Papa did everything possible to make life pleasant for us, and the others did not mind the absence of the Student. But Nana knew that I missed her "boy," and she was profoundly grateful to me for what I could not help. Indeed, if truth must out, by this time my feeling for our nurse's gifted nephew was as near love as

it is possible for a fanciful child's sentiments to be. Don't frown, sensible reader. "Keep 'remembering," as Brose would say, that I was a story-loving little girl in the Story-Book House, and that even if I had been a grown young lady, the Student was an "impossibility." I liked to think that my affection for him was hopeless; like the average girl of my years, I loved to pity myself in imagined melancholy. Well had darling Brose's lisping tongue renamed me "'Tella 'Torey."

One day in July, Uncle Papa took us to the boat-house to which he had put the new landing-steps the day before. After we had admired his loving handiwork, he proposed to row us across the river to Virginia. We used to make believe that we were great travellers, sometimes, when we could journey so easily from one State to another.

I felt unaccountably weary. The others romped for a full hour with Uncle Papa, but I — I sat on the sward under a tree and gazed dreamily at the river running past and the mountains standing still forever. I knew that I had been growing weaker; I glanced across the water at the cemetery on the mountainside, and, in composing for myself a harrowing epitaph, took such pleasure as nobody but a very young girl can comprehend.

The gleeful shouts of my brothers accented the pathos of my thoughts; I felt that their turn would come to weep, when they should read the mortuary inscription of that poor "Estelle Gratiot Storey, daughter of the late Estelle Gratiot and Ambrose Manus Storey, aged fifteen," for I had determined to live to a more interesting age.

Brose ran to me to hide from Frank, and found me crying silently. My darling boy stopped, struck to the heart. "My 'Tella!" he cried. "Is you hurted, my very dearie?"

"Some day, — perhaps very soon, I shall go to papa and mamma, and Grandmamma Storey," I was beginning, with tearful heartlessness, when poor little Brose set up a howl, which stopped the game, and brought Uncle Papa running to us, followed by Frank.

"My 'Tella's going to die dead!" wailed Brose.

"Stella die!" exclaimed Frank. "Yes, when she's ninety past. You should see the bowlful of oatmeal she finished this morning!"

As a matter of fact, I had eaten little or nothing for a week of breakfasts, and I was about to protest indignantly, when Uncle Papa came to my aid.

"Estelle is thinner and paler," he said, looking at me tenderly. "It is the warm weather, without

doubt. But if it is not, we must have the doctor to bring back the roses and dimples — ”

“ Which she never had, Uncle Papa. Stella was always slight and white that way, but she’s stronger than she thinks she is. Come for a romp, Stell; that’s what you want,” advised Frank.

“ No; she is not lively enough for that,” said Uncle Papa, watching me closely. “ We’ll all sit here, and I’ll tell you a story.”

“ No; ” I answered, perversely. “ I don’t want to hear a story.”

Uncle Papa looked disappointed, and, wishing to finish matters, I said, “ If the Student were here, I’d like to hear an Irish story.”

“ But Nana — ”

“ Oh, I know every one of Nana’s stories! ”

“ Now, you don’t suppose Uncle Papa knows any Irish story? ” expostulated Frank.

“ But I do! ” was our dear friend’s unexpected answer.

“ As if Nuncle Papa don’t know every kind of a ’tory! ” said loyal Brose. “ Is it a fairy-tale, Nuncle Papa? ”

“ A story of giants,” replied our patient Alsatian.

“ Do tell it, Uncle Papa,” I pleaded, a bit ashamed of myself. “ Don’t mind my crossness, please! ” And he didn’t, dear Uncle Papa!

THE GIANTS

The father of Frederick the Great was a very queer character. You have heard about his Potsdam regiment, which was made up of gigantic men from all countries. His recruiting agents travelled everywhere to get the biggest men in the world. The commander was a stalwart German who took great pride in his regiment of giants.

One day the king said to him: "Von Grosse, tell me this. How many nationalities are represented in the Big Regiment?"

Von Grosse, beaming with pride, answered: "Most Serene Majesty, the Big Regiment is composed first of Prussians. Then come Hanoverians, Saxons, Danes, Swedes, Dutchmen, Poles, Austrians, and Russians. There is one Italian, one Englishman, one Scotchman, and one Spaniard. A Frenchman we had, Serene Majesty, but Grosjean escaped to perfidious France."

"May he wither for it!" snarled the king.

"Ah, those French are mad for their land," continued Von Grosse. "This stupid Grosjean cried that he would rather die in bed if he could not fight under the lilies of France."

"May the lilies wither forever!" cried Frederick.

"We have also in the Big Regiment," Von

Grosse went on, "a great Ethiopian. He is taller than any of the others except the mighty Scotch giant. Mongolians we found too short for your Serene Majesty's object, but we have a gigantic Bedouin."

"And you have an Englishman and a Scotchman?"

"We have both, Serene Majesty."

Frederick William reflected.

"An American," he mused, "would mean nothing but a savage native, a half-bred Spaniard, or a European colonist. Still you have left out another country. My kinsman, the Baron Fleisch, tells me that sometimes in the English armies and sometimes in the forces of France there are to be found men who fight as if life were nothing to them; who unite the audacity of the French with the resistance of the English; in short, who are ideal soldiers. Sometimes these men are little, sometimes they are big; always they are valiant. I want you, Von Grosse, to get one of the biggest for my Big Regiment."

"But, Serene Majesty, you have not given me the name of the wonderful country which produces such wonderful fighters. It is not Ireland, is it, Sire?"

"Even so, Von Grosse. And you must procure for me, by buying, begging, or stealing, an Irish giant for my Big Regiment."

“Ach, those Irish!” cried Von Grosse. “Did I not meet one of them when we fought at Lorraine? Ay, truly he was no big man, but he was of iron. I was young, too, then, and he subdued even big me. He took me prisoner, and I tried to speak to him. I spoke in German, he shook his head; I tried French, still he did not understand me. His tongue was as fiery as his head, and he repeated one phrase so often and so violently that it became fastened in my memory.”

The king was interested. “What was the phrase?” he asked.

“It was like this, ‘*Moortherin’ Dootchman.*’ I could make no meaning of it, but a French officer told me the man was Irish; so I conclude that he spoke his own language.”

Frederick laughed. “Ay, Von Grosse, and we will make an Irishman learn German. Send Corporal Schwartzbergerheim to Ireland. He is a trusty man and speaks English. And remember,” continued the king, relapsing into severity, “my wishes must be obeyed speedily.”

Von Grosse bowed and retired. Within an hour he had Corporal S. with the long name all ready to start for Ireland. The corporal was provided with the necessary passports, and France being just then quiescent, he managed to reach Ireland in safety. After spending a week there he met with no success, and he wrote despairingly

to Von Grosse, who was afraid to tell the tyrant. A second letter, however, gave better news. He had found an Irishman over seven feet tall, who wished to see the world, and was willing to accompany Corporal S. He was not so tall as the Scotchman or the Ethiopian, but he was Irish, every inch of him, and that's what the king wanted. And, by an astonishing coincidence, his name was Fred, an unusual one in Ireland. Shortly after his arrival the king came to inspect the Big Regiment.

"Did you get the Irish giant?" he asked Von Grosse.

"Yes, Serene Highness. He is not so much of a giant, but he is the biggest Irishman we could find."

"What is his height?"

"Seven feet, one and three-quarter inches," replied Von Grosse, elongating his words as much as possible.

"Bah!" said Frederick; "that's but a dwarf. His name?"

"Fritz, Serene Majesty."

"Fritz!" echoed "Serene Majesty," sternly. "An Irishman named Fritz? Impossible! You have been deceived, Von Grosse. He is neither Irish nor gigantic. You have deceived yourself and, worse still, you have deceived *me!*"

The king's voice became terrible.

The Irishman had been looking on curiously. "What's the ould bosthoon saying?" he asked Corporal S.

"He says — it is der Konig — he says you haf not enough inches."

The Irishman opened his eyes.

"I've got twice as many as the little weasel himself," he said.

"And," continued the corporal, "der Konig says you are not Eirish."

At this the Irishman gave a jump that made him three feet taller for a second.

"Let me get at him," he cried, "and if I don't pound some Irish into him my name's not Fred O'Donnell, and my blood is none o' the princely O'Donnells of Ireland!"

As he spoke he leaped from the ranks, and casting his tall helmet on the ground he capered before the king.

"D'ye want to fight? Are you half a man?" he called out.

"Who is the red-haired madman?" asked Frederick.

"It is the Irishman, Serene Majesty."

"And what is he saying?"

Von Grosse called Corporal S. to act as interpreter. That wily traveller had no idea of translating O'Donnell's speech verbatim.

"He says, most Serene Majesty, that if your

Serene Majesty will pick out any one of the giants he'll fight him to show you the quality of Irish blood."

Corporal S. retired smiling, having thus committed O'Donnell. The Irish giant had given him some trouble, and now he was amply to be revenged. The king was delighted.

"Bring out the Ethiopian!" he commanded.

Von Grosse summoned Umshala, who stalked forward in all his black height to confront O'Donnell.

The Irishman understood instantly what was expected of him. He rolled up his sleeves and shook his fist in the Ethiopian's face.

"Come on, ye blackguard!" he cried.

Von Grosse took away all weapons from both combatants, and they closed in. The black man was nine inches taller than O'Donnell, but he lacked the muscular activity of the Irishman, to whom wrestling was an every-day pastime. In a few minutes he threw the Ethiopian.

"O'Donnell aboo!" he exclaimed.

Frederick clapped his hands. "The Scotchman! the Scotchman!" he cried, excitedly.

At Von Grosse's orders an extraordinarily large man stepped out. He was immense, towering more than a foot above the Irishman. When told what was expected of him he smiled triumphantly and advanced toward O'Donnell.

"MacGregor is my name," he cried, "a Highlander was I born. Here I stand, eight feet three inches high, the biggest man in all the world, and glad am I to fight you, man of Ireland, man to man, and the biggest man will win."

"The best man will win," amended the Irishman, secretly appalled at his adversary's great size and confidence. "Here I stand, O'Donnell of the O'Donnells, seven foot one, and there you shall lie, MacGregor, eight foot three on the ground."

This was mere boasting. The contestants were unevenly matched. MacGregor had muscle in proportion to his size, and twice he almost bent O'Donnell to the earth by sheer force of strength. It was very exciting.

"The Irishman holds out well," observed the king.

"He is active," said Von Grosse. "But he will fall. The great Scotchman is the stronger."

Even as he spoke MacGregor sprawled on the ground, the most astonished as well as the biggest man in the world. The Irishman held his head high.

"O'Donnell forever!" he called. "Are there any more of ye?"

"Bravo, Irishman!" cried Frederick, while Von Grosse motioned the two giants back to their

places. "To-morrow, Von Grosse, I will give you a purse of gold for the great Irish fighter."

"Truly he can fight, Serene Majesty."

"Ay, he comes of a nation of fighters," said the king. "In good truth, Von Grosse, I have been informed that these Irish love so well to fight that they are always fighting among themselves!"

"But that's a German story, isn't it?" said Frank. "You can't call it Irish because you have one Irishman in it, can you?"

"It's the Irishman's story, 'cause he beated all the others," pronounced Brose, always ready to take Uncle Papa's side of the case.

"I think it's told from a French standpoint," said I. "I call Grosjean the real hero of the tale. But it is a good story, Uncle Papa, thank you."

"It is the only Irish story I know," said Uncle Papa. "And I'm afraid, my dears, that I've told it like an Alsatian that I am, — half-French, half-German!"

It was the last story I was destined to hear for a long, long time. Next day I did not feel equal to leaving the rocking-chair on the verandah. Doctor Tyler was summoned from Storeytown by anxious Uncle Papa, and I was ordered tonics of various sorts. Every day I was taken for a drive

up the mountain road, and day by day, in spite of care and medicine, I grew weaker. Grandpapa and the Student were expected to be home the last week in August, and by that time I was unable to be up.

On the day when Uncle Papa got Grandpapa's telegram, I begged hard to be allowed to go with the others to the station. This the doctor positively interdicted, but, to please me, he gave me permission to sit on the verandah. I insisted on wearing my prettiest frock, — how well I remember it! — a rose-pink lawn, fluffy with many ruffles. "The rosy color seems to take some of the paleness out of my face," I said.

I strained my eyes for the first appearance of the carriage between the locusts at the end of the thorn-hedge. At last! nearer and nearer, now in the gates and up the drive. I saw the gray head of Grandpapa and the Student's ruddy hair; I heard the "Hurrah!" of some one, I can't tell who, — I rose to cry "Welcome!" — and then, then I fell back and knew that my mouth was filled with something like warm salt water, and that all my crisp pink ruffles were drenched with crimson, and then I grew fainter, blinder, and presently knew nothing at all.

Doctor Tyler and Grandpapa were in the room — my own white, cool room — when I

came to realize what a shocking welcome I had given our travellers. Nana was kneeling beside me, with restoratives in her loving hands. "The excitement precipitated the hemorrhage," the doctor was saying, and I thought in a dull way that doctors must be fond of using the longest words in the dictionary. "We must strengthen her for the time being," he continued. "By and by a change of climate will benefit the lungs."

Grandpapa looked at me with an expression such as I had never seen in his eyes. "My darling little girl —" he said, and could say no more, for the doctor promptly marched out of the room with him. I was forbidden to speak, but I looked my question at Nana, and she answered:

"Yes, my lamb, he has a tender heart, the master. Well I know it, that knew him in my dear, dead lady's happiest days. But 'tis he had the store o' trouble, and small wonder it seemed to turn him cold and hard-like. Sure, but this new trouble — and a small one 'twill be, please God — will bring him anear to his son's children. God's ways are not our ways, alanna. Ah, then, but you'll love your grandfather when he lets you know him rightly, so you will!"

CHAPTER XX.

FROM LILY - LAND

By the first week in October I was able to sit up, and two weeks later Doctor Tyler pronounced me fit for my journey in search of lung-health. So Grandpapa — a new and very dear Grandpapa — took me to Norfolk, where we rested a week, and where our cousin, Mrs. Campion, and her nephew, young Campion Storey, joined us. Mrs. Campion — she had been Alma Webster Storey — was a wealthy childless widow. Besides the mines which her husband had financed out in New Mexico, and her magnificent Washington properties, Mrs. Campion owned a plantation in the Bermudas, which she visited every winter. As soon as she heard of my illness and its nature, she immediately sent word to Grandpapa, begging him to take me to spend the winter among her lilies. It was very good of Mrs. Campion to forget that Grandpapa invariably had refused her invitations. This time, for my sake, he accepted, and the first of November

found us sailing for the beautiful island where we were to spend five happy months.

Within a few weeks the wondrous climate had restored to me much of my former strength and elasticity, and by Christmas I was pleading to go home. But Grandpapa, although he indulged my every whim at this time, would not hear of my return until perfect health was assured to me. So I pottered around the Campions' lily-fields, growing plump and rosy-brown, and resembling in nowise the little spectre who had opened Grandpapa's eyes and cut into his sealed heart that August afternoon.

I was fickle; oh, yes, the beloved Student was almost forgotten: I was in love with Grandpapa. I studied his tastes; I tried to please him in every way: he was father and mother to me ever after his return from Europe. He and Mrs. Campion did a good deal of visiting and entertaining while they were at St. David's; they often went to Hamilton and St. George; the recluse of the mountains showed that he had not forgotten his mastery of social requirements, though I'm very sure that these same dues of society bored him quite as much as they delighted Mrs. Campion.

The boy, Campion Storey, studied three hours every day with old Doctor Seabrooke, whose many lilies and few pupils furnished interest to

a lonely life, ravelling out its last days in peace on an island of sunshine and flowers. Campion used to wheel me about in my rolling chair at first, but very soon I was able to walk, and then the kind boy devoted most of his leisure time to accompanying me in my rambles among the blossoming fields and along the coral strand. He was to return to Mount Stuart with us. Mrs. Campion meant to spend the summer in England, and her brother, Captain Storey, the boy's father, was on army duty in Montana, so our house was just the place for "Camp," who had one bond besides his relationship to draw him to us; like the children of the Story-Book House, he, too, was motherless. Grandpapa seemed to be glad to take young Campion with him; he felt that the boy, studious, yet athletic, and as gentle-mannered as he was brave-spirited, ought to be an excellent comrade for our heady Frank.

What did I do with myself while Camp was studying every day? What do you think? — I wrote my first story! I meant to surprise Uncle Papa and Frank and Brose when the inevitable "tell a story" hour should come; I meant to say, "I am Brose's 'Tella Storey; don't you want to hear me?"

We had planned to return about the first of April, and you see, it's an Easter story. When

I had finished I made Camp read it to me. Oh, yes, I've written many, many stories since — I am truly 'Tella Storey — but not one of them all ever gave me the wondering delight excited in me by the writing and the reading of this, my firstling.

LAURIE'S LILY.

I was born in St. David's Isle, in the Bermudas. Perhaps you have seen my beautiful native country? It is away out in the Atlantic Ocean, opposite your Charleston in South Carolina, and a great many sick people from the States go to the dear Lily-land to get well and happy.

My beloved native isle! There it is always summer, though never sultry; there the sweet, soft breezes blow with the freshness of the vast Atlantic and the fragrance of a million million flowers. Oh, for a sight of the coral roads, the avenues of royal palm, the hedges spilling roses, the valley lilies and violets growing in the shadow of the juniper cedars, the wild patches of hyacinth, jasmine, and tuberose, and the tangle of roses and woodbine enriching the lowliest cabin garden! Oh, for a glimpse of mine own glorious lily field, where my stately-sweet brothers and sisters nodded kindly greetings to one another in the blue-skied white days of my babyhood!



“‘MAMMA, ISN'T THIS A PERFECT BULB?’”

It must be nearly a year since I was dug out of my cosy earthen bed. I was then round and paly-brown, with many scallops about my ball-like figure. I found myself in the palm of a human hand, a pinky yellow palm with dark brown edges. Although the sunlight dazzled me, I managed to glance up at the face of my digger. It was a very black, shiny face, with great popping eyes and a great mouth that was all a-teeth with a jolly grin.

“Hyar’s a fine bu’b, Missy,” said Blackface.

Then a soft voice spoke. “It cert’n’y is a nice, plump bulb. Give it to me, Pete.”

Oh, what a little hand! I completely covered it. Then I looked up and saw a girlish face smiling at me. Missy wore a wide-brimmed straw hat over her crop of black curls, and although her frock was a simple white print affair, I cannot tell you how pretty and graceful she looked standing among the tall lily-stalks, the only lily abloom in the harvested field.

Missy bore me to a low verandahed house, where a pale little lady sat sewing in the afternoon shade. “Mamma, isn’t this a perfect bulb?” cried the girl.

“The — finest — yet,” responded the little lady, in languid enthusiasm, fondling me with thin, bloodless fingers.

I began to feel a little proud of myself. I had

learned my name; I was a bulb, and I was classed "fine," "perfect," and "finest" — a very gratifying state of things! After all this praise I was not a little disappointed to find myself thrust into a dark bin with a hundred other bulbs, differing from me only in size and plumpness. We lay there in the dark a long, long time — many months, I believe — and then one autumn day we were taken out, baskets were filled with us, and we were placed on wheelbarrows and wheeled out to the field by jolly black Pete and Lucinda, his coffee-colored wife.

Again I saw Missy, lively and supple, her dark curls clustering about her sun-browned neck. With her was another girl of about her own age, but as different from Missy as possible, a very fragile little creature, with great, soft blue eyes and thin fair hair. What struck me first about her was her likeness to Missy's mother. Both were blonde, delicate, and exceedingly languid; neither, alas! had my Missy's glowing health and tireless spirit.

"I don't see why mamma thinks that I shall get strong here," said the pale little girl, sitting wearily down on the tongue of a wheelbarrow, while Lucinda and Missy were burying the bulbs in the newly cut furrows of rich, black soil. "I'm here a whole month and I'm just as tired

as ever. And then look at Aunt Anna! Why, she's as frail as I am, and she lives here always!"

Missy looked anxious. "Do you think mamma's delicate, Cousin Laurie?" And then without waiting for an answer, she went on: "That's just a look she has, I think. And you, Laurie, you're not exactly frail, you know; you are so fair and so — so thin; you have that look, too," she concluded, lamely.

"Yes, I have 'that look;' I might as well have stayed at home," declared Cousin Laurie, dejectedly.

Missy took her by the shoulders. "Don't say that again, bad girl! Wait till you see our lilies abloom and you'll never want to go back to New York. Now, I'm going to put you to work. I want to have some specially fine bulbs in pots, and the task of setting them shall be yours."

Just then Missy spied me in the wheelbarrow.

"Why, here's my big beauty!" she cried. "This is going to be a very queen of lilies. Now, Laurie, you'll find a lot of empty earthen pots at the end of the kitchen-garden. Get a ten-inch size and bring it here."

The little New York girl rose and walked slowly toward the herbarium, and Lucinda, watching her, muttered: "Dat ar chile's feet's hebbier'n all rest ob her. Yas, yo' right, Missy,

mak' 'er stir 'self. She run round lak yo', and get strong bimeby."

Presently Laurie returned. "Such a long walk!" she gasped. "And such a heavy flower-pot!" Missy, looking at her wonderingly, took the pot lightly between her own brown little finger and thumb.

"You must fill it now, Laurie," she said. "That's right; put in some pebbles first for drainage; now a shovelful of earth — what, you can't lift the shovel? Well, sit down and put the earth in by handfuls. Oh, 'twon't hurt your hands; Bermuda soil is the cleanest dirt in the whole world, you know; it's all coral dust and seaweed and flower petals. That's enough earth for underneath; now put in the bulb; see! it has lovely green spear-points already. Now the top layer; that'll do — Why, Laurie, Laurie!"

For the little visitor drooped suddenly like a blighted lily. "Oh, I've made you work too hard!" cried Missy, remorsefully. Lucinda dipped a gourdful of water from a sprinkling-can and tenderly bathed Laurie's pale face.

"I'll carry her in, Missy. No, she ain't yo' kind, po' lil lamb!"

After that, Laurie was content to sit and watch Missy helping Pete and Lucinda. I was taken to the verandah, where she poured toy cupfuls of

water on me every evening. She liked to sit in the shade and chat with Missy's mother.

"It's so strange," she said one day. "Missy looks just like my mamma, and she says I am like you, Aunt Anna."

"Not so very strange, dear, when your mamma is my sister. I named Missy for her when I saw that the baby's eyes were like my dear Clare's."

"Clare's a pretty name. But her papa — he was my Uncle Roger, wasn't he? — he liked to call her Missy, didn't he? Now, I've made you cry, Aunt Anna! Well, I'm not sorry that Uncle Roger's gone to heaven!"

The widow smiled through her tears at the queer speech. "Yes," continued Laurie, hunching her shoulders like a very small old grandame; "Uncle Roger will be there before us, Aunt Anna. For we can't live so very much longer, you and I."

"Who told you that?" asked Missy's mother, somewhat sharply.

"Oh, I know plenty of things I've never been told. Don't you eat like a little canary, just a pick, as I do? Don't you stay awake nights and cough — oh, I've heard you. You and I are going the same road, Aunt Anna!"

Then the little, old-fashioned creature held

her aunt's hand very close, and the delicate woman and the invalid child cried softly together.

Christmas came, and a great many of the lilies were in bloom for the feast. I am an Easter lily, so I was among those kept in the shade for future blossoming. I had grown very tall; I wondered greatly to see the long green stalks unfolding from my tight little jacket. Oh, how I longed for the crowning glory of my lily-blooms! But I had never a bud when Laurie went away.

She was aching to be at home, and every day she sat among the pillows on the verandah, watching the sea for the steamer which was to bring her father and mother to her, and which was to bear the three back again to the midwinter city. And at last, one day when I had overslept, I woke up to find the frail little creature sobbing in the arms of a tall, dark-eyed lady, who was the very picture of Missy. And then a great-bearded man kissed the little girl and cried: "Now we shall have our little Laurie as strong as ever!"

But it was a very weak little Laurie that was lifted into the conveying carriage when the boat was ready to return. With the smilingly spoken stipulation, "If I live," Missy's mother promised to spend the summer in New York. But little Laurie gave her aunt a queer, sad, last look. "Good-by, good-by, until I see you again, darling

Aunt Anna!" she cried. "And, oh, Missy, take care of my lily!"

How glad I was that the dear little sufferer had not forgotten me! Poor Missy watered me with her tears that day, ay, and the next, for her mother failed rapidly after Laurie's departure. I heard the doctor tell the weeping Lucinda some story about the lungs holding out "fairly well." But — and after that "but" Lucinda wept anew. It was not long until some silently sympathetic men came from the town with a strange long case, and two days afterwards the case was carried away in a great black car, and Missy, all in black, followed with the two servants. I knew nothing of death, but I saw Missy's mother no more.

Then the new owner of the property came, and with him old Doctor Dunstan. Missy was pleased to hear that the proprietor, who was going to live in the old home, intended to keep faithful Pete and Lucinda about the place. Then, having gathered all her little worldly belongings, the orphan girl went away with the doctor. She bore me in her arms, and I saw how kindly Doctor Dunstan's daughters greeted her when she arrived at their residence, which was to be her temporary home.

I had six buds when a letter came from Laurie's father and mother — a letter summoning Missy

to New York. She was placed in care of the steamer captain, and I was still her personal charge. She and I watched our dear, beautiful island home until it faded from our vision. And then all at once, as it seemed, the air turned keen and cold. Oh, how I shivered that March evening when we arrived at the great city — a black forest of tall ships and tall houses! I had been kept in the warm cabin, and already one of my buds was bursting. Poor little Missy and I were huddled into a cab, and Missy's little trunk was placed on top, near where the driver sat on his funny perch. And then we were rattled through ever and ever so many streets until we reached Laurie's number on Lexington Avenue. Then the driver got down and rang the bell, and presently a man in livery opened the door and scolded the cabman whisperingly. All that I heard was, " Ringing the bell at such a time as this! — can't you see, man? "

What I could see was a lovely garland of flowers on the door-bell, and long white streamers of ribbon and crêpe. I thought it very pretty, but poor tired Missy did not notice it at all. Her trunk was taken through the area, and she, still bearing me in her arms, was ushered through the hall door and up a great polished staircase into a lofty room walled to the ceiling with books. Missy placed me upon a table and seated herself

forlornly in one of the huge leather chairs. The room was but dimly lighted; indeed, the great house seemed to be swallowed in gloom and silence. Then I heard the rustling of silken skirts. Some one came hurriedly into the room, and Missy was folded in the arms of her aunt, who moaned rather than spoke, "Welcome! oh, what a welcome!"

"But why are you crying so, Aunt Clare? How is Laurie?"

"Don't you know, Missy, don't you know yet? It's — all over. It was last night. She went from us like a little angel. She asked again and again, 'Did Missy come yet?' Just at the last she thought she saw her Aunt Anna. Oh, Missy, you must be my daughter now — my Laurie wished it so! She said, 'Mamma, I was too like poor Aunt Anna, but Missy is Little You.'"

I'm sure I don't know why they were crying. I didn't understand a bit of the conversation until Missy said, sobbingly: "And I brought her the lily she planted herself — oh, look, Aunt Clare, the very first Easter lily has opened for her!"

It was true; my first bud was in full blossom.

I have five lilies now all ready for Easter Sunday, and four new buds, and I wonder why Laurie, who was so fond of me, doesn't come

to see me! They cut my first lily, and I heard some one say that it was placed in Laurie's hands. I love Missy dearly, of course, but I wish little Laurie would not neglect me so!

CHAPTER XXI.

AN EASTER EGG

CAMP was very much interested when I described our "Story-Book House."

"But you're too fond of living in a world of unreality," he protested.

"A world of imagination," I corrected, firmly; "the nicest world in the world, Camp. Wait until you see."

Toward the end of March Mrs. Campion paid her farewell visits, and the first of April found us on the steamer, homeward bound. Mrs. Campion returned to Washington to prepare for her journey to England, and Grandpapa, Camp, and I went straight to Storeytown, where the loving and loved ones greeted us as we left the train. I was admired and petted beyond measure. "The darlin', — she's as fat as butter!" cried dear Nana, the great tears streaming down her wrinkled face, as she held me to her faithful heart in an ecstasy of joy.

"It is most becoming," declared Uncle Papa,

gallantly. "Estelle was too spirituelle, — there's poetry, *mes enfants!* — She has the color of the beautiful rose La France, and all the hiding dimples you denied her, Master Frank!"

"You look real fit, Stell;" decided Frank. But Brose, my darling, slipped his chubby arms around my neck as I bent to kiss him, and he whispered, "My 'Tella! You are looking like my dream-mamma, my very dearie!"

Who was on the verandah but Grandme? The poor Madame had hastened from New Orleans when she heard of my attack, only to arrive at Mount Stuart the day after we had sailed from Norfolk. So she had braved the discomforts of our mountain winter for once, sharing Nana's cares with unwonted diligence, while she impatiently awaited our return. For you must know, that, because of my name, and a certain French look I am supposed to have, I was Madame Grandme's favorite, and the fear of my early death moved her beyond her wont. Now, as she embraced me, she, like Nana, shed tears of joy as she verified dear Brose's dreams in her first words, "My love, you have grown so like your pretty mamma!"

We were tired enough to sleep well that night, after we had sent our stores of Bermuda lilies to the little church, where we saw them in their glory the next morning — Easter Sunday. We

were too excited to think of stories until after tea the next evening, when Camp told Frank that I had written a tale of the Bermudas. Of course I had to read it then, and after "Laurie's Lily" had been applauded beyond its merits, Madame told us a French Easter story.

THE FRECKLED EGG

It was Saturday, the eve of Easter, 1600. Celeste was swinging on the cottage gate, with her eyes fixed dreamily on the vivid blue of the sky, and all her young senses enjoying the beauty and the balm of the fresh spring morning. Yet Celeste was murmuring to herself, "I wish — I wish" — not that she might be permitted to swing forever on an old-fashioned gate in the April sunlight, which would have been a most fairylike wish, indeed, — "I wish," thought Celeste, "that I might have eggs for Easter, too. I wish grandmother was like other grandmothers. Raoul and Pierre and Yvonne and Marie and Jeanne have dozens of eggs for to-morrow. I wish Uncle Victor wasn't so fierce-looking. I wish I could have even one egg. I wish I could have the big egg of Uncle Victor's big foreign guinea-hen. I wish —"

"Celeste!" called grandmère, and the little

maid leaped to the ground instantly and ran inside, for grandmère wasn't to be trifled with, as Celeste knew.

"Idle girl!" cried the old woman; "my old bones are far more lively than thy young limbs. Thou'lt be a beggar or an emigrant yet, as thou wouldst be now but for my care. Get thee quickly to Maître Bouchet with this basket of eggs and bring me back the price — three francs. Spill none of them, pay no heed to loiterers, and put the money in thy purse. If anything be lost —"

Grandmère merely held up one rigid finger very near her sharp nose, and Celeste knew well that punishment would follow any disobedience. Yet she hesitated.

"Grandmère," she faltered, "may I not have a few eggs for Easter?"

"A few eggs!" echoed the grandmother, in tones of astonishment. "May the Pasch never dawn if the little idiot doesn't ask for eggs as if they were broken stones in the roadway! What, must I toil from morning till night feeding and caring for chickens in order that thou mayst eat eggs? Victor tells me that in some foreign lands eggs are sacred — that none would dare to eat them because they hold the principle of life. And truly, it grieves me to see fools eating eggs when they might have chickens if they but

waited. Go, go, and hasten; let me hear no more nonsense about eggs. What, wilt thou linger until I get the cane?"

Celeste looked pleadingly at the old woman.

"I will go now, grandmère," she said. "But — but do you think Uncle Victor would give me an egg?"

"Victor! Thy uncle is no egg merchant, simpleton."

"No; but, grandmère, I was down at the coop this morning where the great foreign fowls are, and I peeped in, and, grandmère, I saw an egg — such a big egg! and all freckled like Pierre Latour's nose. I know the big birds are Uncle Victor's, and I thought he might give me the big egg, and — oh, grandmère! you are hurting my arm!"

For the old woman had grasped her with sudden violence.

"Gabbler!" she cried. "Have I not told thee to keep a still tongue about the foreign fowls? If some knew we had them, they would be stolen ere the morrow. Thine uncle might make a fortune exhibiting them, but that he is afraid of thieves. The only New World fowls in all France, and Mademoiselle must have the first egg, forsooth! Away, light-head! There is the basket."

Celeste took up the basket and went out silently,

wishing again that grandmère would be like other grandmothers. She was the only mother the child had ever known, and her rule was as stern as her hand was close. "As stingy as Mère Minot," was a proverb in St. Etienne. Her son, Michel, Celeste's father, had been killed in battle; her other son, Victor, was an adventurous sailor, who was seldom at home, and her husband had been dead for twenty years. Mère Minot was popularly supposed to have an immense hoard of money. She was an indefatigable worker, and her piece of ground yielded more francs than it would have accorded sous to a less active farmer. She had hotbeds, and cold-frames, and was famous for her early berries and salads, which were bought at enormous prices by Maître Bouchet, the steward of Monsieur le Duc, at the great château on the hill. She supplied eggs and butter and cheese also to the ducal household, as well as to some less noble establishments. It would be singular indeed if Celeste's thrifty grandmother had no money.

But the little girl had never known the luxuries of good living. Sometimes she had been given a generous slice of cake in the château kitchen, and grandmère always relaxed so far as to put one egg in the currant cake at Christmas, the only feast kept in the Minot cottage.

There were three dozen eggs in the basket for

the château. Celeste found herself wondering how people could afford to eat so many eggs. And some of the peasants ate — actually ate — butter. Celeste and her grandmother lived year in and year out on black bread and skimmed milk, a diet more wholesome than gratifying. The little maid sighed. Grandmère was right, of course, but how wrong must be the Latours and the Dumonts who always gave their children a basketful of eggs for Easter!

She came back from the château with the money safely in her pocket, and the empty basket swinging on her arm. At the foot of the hill, where the little brook splashed over its white stones, were the young Dumonts and Latours, Marie and Yvonne and Raoul of the first name, and Pierre and Jean of the last.

“Here is Celeste!” cried Marie Dumont. “Look, Celeste; Pierre Latour has the biggest egg you ever saw.”

“Oh, I have many eggs for Easter,” boasted Pierre. “Where, Celeste, are your eggs?”

“I’m tired looking at eggs,” said Celeste, calling her pride to her aid.

“Looking at them, oh, yes! that’s all you can do.” Pierre was not the best specimen of a sixteenth-century boy. “You can’t touch an egg,” he went on. “I believe you’ve never had an egg of your own. What would you give to have

one like this?" displaying an enormous goose-egg. "Did you ever see an egg as big as that?"

"Ay," retorted Celeste, thoughtlessly. "Nearly as big and as freckled as your face."

The other children laughed merrily, and Pierre reddened with vexation.

"Lying is easy," he remarked, meaningly.

"Not to Celeste," interposed Yvonne Dumont. "Celeste never told a lie in her life."

"Let her show us this wonderful egg, then," said Pierre.

But Celeste was frightened by this time and sorry for her reckless boast.

"Grandmère wouldn't let you in, you know," she explained, timidly.

"Ho! that's a fine excuse," cried Pierre. "I knew there was no such egg."

"Get it, Celeste, and show it to him," said Marie.

"Seeing — is — believing," drawled Pierre, scornfully.

Celeste hastened back to the cottage. Grandmère had forbidden her to speak of the turkeys. After all, she had not mentioned them. She had spoken only of the egg. She persuaded herself that this was not the same thing, and even if she did show the egg to that impudent Pierre Latour, he need never know but that a goose had laid it. So she consoled herself with bare possibilities,

after the manner of those who work against conscience.

She reëntered the cottage and laid the empty basket on the table. The day was so mild and drowsy that grandmère had fallen asleep in a chair with her wrinkled hand on the churn. Celeste slipped out again noiselessly, and hastened to the barn-yard. In a strong coop were the strange birds, looking wistfully out upon the chickens cackling and running about in freedom. Uncle Victor had said that these new Indian birds were wild: he was taming them by captivity. They did not look savage, thought Celeste, and what beauties they were with their rich fawn-colored coats! Uncle Victor had brought them from America; when they were tame he would sell them — perhaps to the king.

Certainly the first turkeys in France had grown stupid in their prison. Celeste reached her hand through the bar and withdrew the great mottled egg without any difficulty. Wrapping it carefully in her apron she hurried back to the foot of the hill.

“Well, have you brought it?” demanded Pierre.

Celeste opened her apron, and the children crowded about her with long-drawn “oh’s” of admiration.

“It is a great egg, truly,” admitted Pierre.

In spite of Celeste's protestations he caught it up and laid it beside the goose egg on the bank.

"Yes, it's almost as large as my big egg," he added, taking one up in each hand as if to judge by weight.

"And it's all freckled like your face, as Celeste said," laughed Raoul. "If it had a bunch of red hair about it, it would answer for your very picture, my good Pierre."

Pierre's easily aroused temper boiled up instantly. He dropped the egg and doubled his hand into a fist to strike Raoul. The egg fell, rolled, and broke on the brook stones in a great yellow splotch.

"Oh!" cried Celeste, aghast, "you've broken my big egg!"

Pierre thrust the other egg into his blouse.

"Yes, it's broken," he said, sulkily. "But you had no right to compare my face to a freckled egg: the loss is your own fault."

Celeste threw her apron over her head and fled, sobbing wildly. How could she ever face grand-mère? Why, why had she not been silent? She saw now that all her argument had been false, and that she was really guilty of grave disobedience. Grandmère, who was so stern, even when Celeste did not deserve harshness, what would she not do now, when a real fault had been committed? But there was a brave strain in this

little daughter of a sixteenth-century soldier. She wiped her eyes and marched home steadily to "face the music."

Grandmère was busy getting dinner ready, and she was in a very bad humor for having allowed herself to nap in midday. Uncle Victor was smoking a pipe full of that strange Indian herb called tobacco, the fumes of which delighted Celeste, who, fearful as she was of him, took much pleasure in watching her seafaring uncle.

Victor Minot was tanned almost to copper-color by his many voyages in tropical seas. His eyes had the hard, eager expression caused by much searching and straining of vision over sun-mirrored expanses of water. These, and his long black hair and bushy beard, gave him a piratical look, which was in no way lessened by the scarlet cap and glowing neckerchief which habitually he wore. He had been at home for two weeks, and Celeste had never overcome her fear of him.

"Laggard!" cried grandmère. "Lay the plates with speed. Would'st have thine uncle starve?"

"Nay, mother," said Uncle Victor; "it is the last of the Lenten days, and we must still keep fast. But thin milk and black bread will not do for Easter fare. We must have the Pasch feast to-morrow, mother."

"Except at the blessed Christmas-time," replied

Mère Minot, "the good bread and milk has supported me these twenty years, ever since thy father died. But for thee, Victor," she said, softening a little, "I will prepare a dinner fit for a man to-morrow. I have been so much alone that I do not heed the luxury of the table. But I will do for my son what I always did for his father, and to-morrow thou shalt eat thine Easter feast even if I refrain."

"And the little one?" queried Victor, with a note of pity in his voice.

"The little one has been accustomed to my mode of living. It will be all the better for her by and by."

"Are you to have plenty of eggs to-morrow, my little Celeste?" asked Uncle Victor, kindly.

Celeste looked at him shyly. He did not seem to be so fierce, after all. If he would trim his beard and curl his hair in long ringlets like M. le Duc's, he would be quite handsome, even though he wore a leathern jerkin in place of a velvet doublet.

"She shall have no eggs," replied Mère Minot, firmly. "She is twelve years old, old enough to comprehend that when I get a franc for every dozen of eggs it would be swallowing money to eat them."

"Go, Celeste," said Uncle Victor; "in the New Indian bird-coop you will find a large egg. Bring it hither."

Poor Celeste! Her face grew ashy pale, and she trembled while she was making up her mind to speak out courageously and tell the truth.

"Why dost thou hesitate?" stormed her grandmother. "I am in no good humor, I promise thee, and if thou dost not hurry I'll make thee suffer for it. Away, when thine uncle bids thee go!"

Celeste gave one despairing look and ran out.

"You are harsh with the child, mother," observed Victor, gravely.

"Harsh!" echoed Mère Minot in evident surprise. "Harsh with Celeste, when I'm working from morn till night and denying myself necessities that she may have a dower?"

"A little kindness may be better than a large fortune," replied her son. "I know you mean to be kind, but what will your savings profit you if Celeste runs away?"

"If Celeste runs away!" repeated Mère Minot. "She would not do that; where could she go? And it would break my heart if she left me."

"Better let her know that, I think," said the sailor, drily. "If I ever saw an unhappy face, it was that of poor Celeste just now."

While her uncle was thus pleading in her behalf, Celeste was walking mechanically toward the barn-yard — her heart as heavy as lead and her temples aching with agitation.

“What shall I do? what shall I do?” she murmured, wildly. “If grandmère hadn’t been so cross I’d have spoken out to Uncle Victor; he looked so kindly at me. I can never go back now. I must run away. Oh, I wonder if I could go to the new land beyond the seas, where I might be tiring-maid to an Indian princess!”

By the time she had uttered this ambitious desire she found herself in front of the great coop.

“Oh, oh, golden-bird!” she sobbed, addressing one of the brown-plumaged inmates, “I wish you could take me on your back and fly away with me to your own land!”

The turkey-hen addressed looked solemnly at her and moved away. Celeste peered into the coop where the other American birds were lazily perched.

“How large the new fowls are!” she cried, “and how unhappy they look. I wonder if they are homesick. I wish — oh!”

The last was a cry of delight. Celeste slipped her hand between the bars and drew forth another egg. It was even larger than the first, and it had the same freckled complexion. Here was an easy solution of her difficulty! She placed the treasure in her apron and set off at full speed toward the cottage. Suddenly she stopped. What should she say? Why, that she had found the

egg, of course! But this was not the egg laid yesterday; this was a new one. Well, who knew?

"No one," she cried, defiantly. "None but myself — and — and, of course, God. God knows everything."

The tears rolled down her face. The young soul was struggling with the powers of darkness.

"God knows everything," she repeated, reverentially. "Shall he know me as a liar? No, no, no! It is a lie to conceal the truth. I will tell grandmère."

She ran even faster than before, lest her resolution should be shaken, and she entered the cottage hurriedly and stood before her two relatives.

"Here is an egg I found in the coop," she said, breathlessly. "It is the second one I found. I took one out this morning to show it to Pierre Latour, and he broke it."

"Thou'st disobeyed me!" cried Mère Minot, in wrathful amazement.

"You broke an Indian egg!" exclaimed Uncle Victor, quite as angrily. Then he paused.

"Why did you not tell us so at first?" he said. Celeste looked timidly at Mère Minot.

"I was afraid of grandmère," she murmured.

"And having found another egg, you tell us of the first one, though we should have known

nothing about it," said Uncle Victor, wonderingly.

"If thou wert afraid to tell me at once, why art thou not afraid now?" demanded her grandmother.

Celeste did not know the limits of grandmaternal jurisdiction. Perhaps grandmère could have her head cut off, or could send her to prison for life.

"I am afraid of you, grandmère." The soldier's daughter looked into the eyes of the soldier's mother. "But — but I am more afraid of God."

"Bravo! 'Tis a thousand pities she is not Celestin instead of Celeste," cried Uncle Victor. "The king needs men with hearts like thine, my brave Celeste!"

The girl was on her knees before Mère Minot.

"Punish me," she cried, piteously; but grandmère looked at her, softly saying: "Thou'rt punished enough, true heart," and she actually kissed her.

Then who should come in but Raoul Dumont with the original turkey egg! Pierre had broken the goose egg, and slipped the other one into his blouse, but Raoul had noted the action, and captured the great speckled egg after a battle, in which the coveted object barely escaped breakage.

Uncle Victor gave the boy a silver piece for his

pains and Celeste thanked him tearfully. When he had gone grandmère said:

“Celeste, I will give thee six eggs for to-morrow. Thou’rt but in the Easter time of life, after all, and why should my winter cloud thee?”

“Very true, mother,” said Victor Minot, approvingly. “And I, Celeste, will give you one of the India eggs.”

“I shall have it for my Easter egg, then, uncle,” said Celeste, “but I won’t cook it.”

“Is it too large to eat, think you?” inquired Uncle Victor.

“Nay, but I want the first French Indian fowl to come out of my Easter egg,” replied Celeste, smilingly.

“Now shall I say bravo!” said grandmère. “Celeste is no simpleton, after all.”

Celeste had a very happy Easter, and grandmère and Uncle Victor shared her pleasure. She put the “freckled Easter egg” back into the coop on Monday, and in time she had the satisfaction to see a little, fluffy, brown chick, hopping about as unconcernedly as if he were not the first of his kind to open his eyes in sunny France. Celeste named him “Easter,” and he was quite a pet, until he had several brothers and sisters. Then he was sent — where? To the court, and, alas, for poor Easter! to the royal table. There

was a joke current in St. Etienne for some time after. It ran thus :

“ In what year did Easter and Christmas come together? ”

“ In 1600, when the first French turkey (Easter) graced King Henri's Christmas dinner.”

Rather a poor joke, wasn't it? But it is said that the king smiled at it, and then of course the courtiers laughed, and all that was enough to make it a very excellent jest indeed.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE CHRISTMAS STORY - NIGHT

EVEN in a Story-Book House, childhood speeds away all too swiftly. Frank was eighteen; he and Campion entered Harvard that September, when I went to Georgetown Convent. Grandpapa wrote to me every week, telling me all about the Story-Book House, and its narrowed circle of Storeys. Brose and Nellie were making satisfactory progress at the Storeytown Academy; Brose was losing the lisp which had clung to him beyond lisping age. Nana's health was poor that year, and Madame had decided to remain at MountStuart for another winter, instead of proceeding to New Orleans. I'm afraid Madame Grandme had a little tiff with her Louisiana relatives about that time, and they were obliged to "make up" to her most appealingly, in order to induce her to visit them the following year.

As this was the first time I had attended school away from home, needless to say, I counted the weeks, and then the days, and the hours to the

Christmas holidays. At last! Grandme kindly came to Georgetown to take me home, although by this time I was a girl of fifteen, grown almost to my full height (which is but five feet three) and sufficiently well able to take care of myself on so short a journey. But Madame Grandme was nothing if not punctilious. "A work-girl may travel alone; but a demoiselle? no," she explained to the smiling superior, who knew as well as I did that an American girl may be trusted to travel from ocean to ocean, without fear, and without reproach.

"Captain Storey is expected to-morrow; we shall have quite a family reunion," Grandme told me, as our train pulled out from the station.

"He will be surprised to see how tall Camp has grown," said I. "Grandpapa is very fond of Camp."

"He is a young gentleman, your Camp," vouchsafed Grandme. "Now, Francis is a clever boy, handsome and witty, but he is not respectful, not considerate, like his cousin. It is well for your brother that he has for companion so very French a boy."

"I don't think Camp's a bit French, Grandme: why should he be? He has no French ancestry such as we have through mamma. He's just a nice American boy!"

The nice American boy had driven down to

Storeytown station to meet us. "Where is Frank?" I asked.

"He is reading to Nana. She has been saving all sorts of newspaper clippings about her nephew's sayings and doings, and Frank is declaiming every word to her in oratorical style. He's a natural orator, did you know? Yes, indeed; Frank's the only Freshman in the Demosthenian Society at college."

"Camp," said I, "Frank may win the highest honors in his university and I sha'n't be half so proud of him as I am to-day. Think of his bothering to read to his old nurse on the first of his holidays! Now, Grandme, isn't he considerate?"

Madame smiled. "His old Nana is devoted to Francis," she made answer. "I am pleased to know that he is not ungrateful to her."

But Frank was personally interested in the readings, as he informed us, after we had exchanged greetings. "What do you think of the Student, Stell? Why, he's forging ahead like a locomotive! What do you make of this?"

And he proceeded to read for us whole columns, short paragraphs, liberal quotations from discourses by the Reverend Doctor Cleary. One journal termed the young clergyman "the Bosuet of America." Another said, "Doctor Cleary is the prince of pulpit oratory. His voice, singu-

larly sweet in its rich reverberations, is a wonderfully apt vehicle for the delivery of his deeply meaningful, poetically phrased, brilliantly polished ideas." Here were adverbial adjectives, and to spare!

"Oh, I always knew that our Student would be Somebody," said I. "But you, Frank, how well — how very well you read!"

"Doesn't he?" cried Nana, her voice quavering with eagerness. "Sure and maybe, then, he'll be saying blessed words in a pulpit of his own some day!"

Camp and Frank shouted their ha-ha-ha. "No, no, Nana," said Frank. "I've decided to be a judge, so I'm going to study law. Why, you ought to be ridiculously proud, old lady. One of your boys a bishop-to-be, and the other a judge! Say 'Yes, your Honor!'"

And Nana had to say it before he released her from a choking hug. Ah, we all loved Nana, and well she deserved our love!

Christmas night found us gathered around the great hall fire, which had not been lit before since the last Christmas of Grandmamma Storey's life. I sat next to Grandpapa, with my arm around my darling Brose, and Frank was perched on the broad arm of Nana's easy chair. Captain Storey sat between his son and Madame, with Nellie upon his knee. We knew that the "Student," as

we still called Doctor Cleary, could not be with us, but I was not a little disappointed at Uncle Papa's absence. He had been summoned to Washington on some legal business. I recollect that I laughed when I heard this, and wondered what in the world Uncle Papa was doing with the mighty machinery of the law. We were to know all too soon.

Captain Storey was every inch a soldier, tall, broad, bronzed like an Indian. He knew enough stories to fill a book, and they were true tales, every one. His experiences during the Indian skirmishes would make your hair fairly stiffen on your head. Some of these days I must write a volume of "Captain Storey's Stories" — don't you think that's a good title?

We carolled old English Christmas carols, "God rest you, merry gentlemen," "King Yule is the king of the old, old year," and, to please Grandpapa, I sang the Latin hymn, "Adeste Fideles," just as I had sung it in the convent choir. Then my soprano joined Captain Storey's bass, Camp's baritone, and Frank's tenor in "When Shepherds Watched Their Flocks by Night."

We sat in silent meditation, gazing into the red-velvety glow of the fire-log, when Frank said:

"Well, Camp, what about —"

And Camp reddened, and pleaded:

"Don't, Frank!"

"Aha!" cried Captain Storey, with a keen-eyed side-glance at his tall son. "What have you been doing, Camp?"

"I have the honor to introduce to the family the family poet," said Frank, with mock reverence.

"'Tisn't fair," stammered modest Camp. "He stole it out of my desk."

"It?" queried I.

"Doggerel; a Christmas ballad."

"If I'd found it in time, the editors of the *Lampoon* should have had it," said Frank. "Listen, ladies and gentlemen!"

We listened with eager interest, while our orator interpreted our poet:

YE BALLADE OF SIR CHRYSTMASSE

A Mediæval Yule-tide Story

Sir Wilfred Dene of Castledene, a lordly knight was he;
Of royal line his beauteous spouse, the Ladye Aylmerie.

When Christmas came to every home, when every Eng-
lish hearth
Burned brighter with the glow of Yule to light the Babe to
earth,

Sir Wilfrid and his high-born dame were sad in Castledene;
No laughter circled round the board,—no ivy glistened
green:

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The servants stepped with noiseless tread the polished halls
along,
And only kitchen rafters heard a snatch of Christmas song.

Last Christmas Eve my Ladye's grief had all but stifled
prayer;
The little heir of Castledene, her boy, lay dying there;

And when the joyous Christmas bells proclaimed the
Saviour's birth,
Young Cyril Dene had closed his eyes forever on the earth.

So Christmas brought but saddest thought to the Ladye
Aylmerie;
Before the blazing fire she sat in mournful reverie;

She gazed beyond the leaping flames, between the coals
aglow,
And painted through her welling tears the vision of her
woe:

A picture framed in sun-bright hair and lit with eyes of
blue —
That picture buried in the snow beneath the churchyard
yew!

A wailing rose above the wind: — it passed my Ladye's
heed;
Her dreams were circling round her boy, and fancy filled
her need.

Sir Wylfrid, startled, glanced around. He left his Ladye's
side,
And summoned Dickon to unbar the hall-door great and
wide.

"Now hasten, Dickon, bear the torch!" The drifting snow
was piled,
And on a bank the light revealed a woman and a child.

Sir Wilfrid crossed himself in awe, and doughty Dickon
cried,
"The Blessed Mother and her Babe have come at Christ-
mas-tide!"

His master bent above the twain. The baby laughed aloud,
While the snow about its mother wove a blanket — and a
shroud.

The stout retainers bore her in, and labored long in vain,
Nor could their striving summon back her winging soul
again.

They locked the violet of her eyes; they bound her yellow
hair;
With crucifix they crossed her hands; they prayed her
requiem prayer.

Sir Wilfrid held the orphaned babe against his stalwart
breast; —
The wee thing smiled, and cuddled there like a fledgling in
its nest.

The master murmured "Pity!" as he strode within the
room
Where the Ladye dreamed and the firelight gleamed and
the corners held the gloom.

The dreamer knew his footfall; her eyes still sought the
flame:
"Methought I heard a cry," she said, "as if Cyril called
my name?"

"Thou thinkest too much on Cyril," Sir Wilfrid made reply:

"Our boy is with his Saviour. Thou heard'st a passing cry; —

"A woman — died — within our gates —" The babe cooed merrily,

And grave Sir Wilfrid laid the waif upon his Ladye's knee.

Oh, the mother-heart was empty, and the lone arms opened wide,

As she clasped the babe with a gladsome cry that blessed Christmas-tide!

The light on her radiant features was none of the firelit glow:

"He hath Cyril's eyes and Cyril's hair, this child of the Christmas snow!

"Ah, Wilfrid! if none should claim him, the babe may be thine and mine,

For thou hast never a kinsman to strive for the right of line."

Sir Wilfrid smiled as she kissed the child with a new maternal joy: —

"Christ's mother sent thee, motherless one, and thou shalt be my boy!"

"Shall we name the waif for our own dear boy?" dead Cyril's father said.

"Nay, none can ever be Cyril Dene! He that comes in our lost one's stead

"Will share his love, may wear his rights, — but his name? 'Twere a pain too keen!

The babe is a gift of Christmas; may we call him Christmas Dene?

“I will plead with my royal kinsman to grant him a noble’s
right;
The child that was given by Christmas shall be King
Richard’s knight!”

The Ladye sought the monarch the infant’s suit to pray;
King Richard heard his cousin, and he did not say her nay.

The pleaders knelt before the King:—sooth, ’twas a win-
some scene
When royal sword touched baby curls: “Arise—Sir
Christmas Dene!

“Be kind as my Ladye cousin and brave as her worthy lord;
Give England’s friends thy good right hand and England’s
foes thy sword!”

Oh, merry and merry was Castledene when Christmas
came again,
And young Sir Christmas heard the song of, “Peace,
good will to men!”

Oh, the banqueting and carolling in kitchen and in hall
When the little waif of Christmas-tide was little lord
of all!

Years passed and found Sir Christmas page in royal
Richard’s train,
And bonny, gallant cavalier in Hereford Harry’s reign.

When Wild Prince Hal turned stately-wise and graced his
father’s throne,
Sir Christmas Dene of Castledene to lordliest fame had
grown:

In battle brave, in council grave, in courtly grace bedight : —
Never had twain a soothlier son nor king a hardier knight.

That sent the lonely baby life to cheer their lonely days.

Sir Wilfrid and his Ladye lived God's providence to praise
Their years sped on in happy hours to honored age serene —
Thank Him who led the Christmas waif to the lights of
Castledene!

Captain Storey rose, and walking to the hall window, stood looking out upon the starlit, frosty night. Camp seemed to be disappointed when he missed his father's voice from the chorus of praise. But presently the captain returned to his place, and as he looked at Camp we saw that his eyes were misty.

"It is your mother's gift," he said, softly, laying his hand on the boy's shoulder. "I have a little sheaf of her verses to give you, Campion; she might have made a name for herself, but that she died so young, so young. Only eighteen when you were born, boy!"

As he spoke, I seemed to see the girl-wife, the young mother, lying dead, like the violet-eyed wanderer in Camp's ballad, while beside her laughed her baby son, — our Camp. The tears were in my eyes, and over our merry group a solemn hush had fallen, when Grandpapa tactfully opened a new lead, asking the boys about their sports and studies, and calling up reminis-

cences of his own college days. Presently he was telling us a story of the Civil War, which "reminded" Captain Storey of a Sioux ambush and a regimental escapade. Then they drifted into army talk, the comparative merits of the regulars and the volunteers, the efficacy of discipline and so on, until Brose grew weary.

"This is story-night, Captain Storey," said he. "Please tell a Christmas story. It can be a soldier story, if you like, you know," he allowed, graciously.

It was upon these terms that Captain Storey told us the true story of Mercy Steen and the hero of Castle William. It was the last story of that Christmas story-night; it is the last, but —

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE QUEER CHILD'S PRISONER

MERCY STEEN was just nine in December of the year "double-nine," 1799. What an old lady she'd be were she living to-day — and what a sight! Hook-nose meeting shoe-horn chin over toothless gums, eyes faded away between corduroyed wrinkles, hair cremated to thin wisps of ashen gray, hands — but why go on? Time was kinder to Mercy than to let her outlive herself. Let us peep at her as old Father Time painted her at the close of the eighteenth century.

Here's her portrait by Peale. A quaint, pretty little Knickerbocker maid, in a short-waisted, long-skirted, puff-sleeved gown. Was there ever so brilliant a blue as is laked in Mercy's pictured eyes? How well it accords with her gleaming brush of bronze curls and the white-rose texture of her dimpled face! A charming little lady! Perhaps her expression is a bit too serious, for all its innocence; perhaps her eyes are deeper than

her nine years would seem to warrant — perhaps! Certainly Mercy was not an ordinary little girl. People were wont to say that the commandant's only daughter was old-fashioned, precocious — “a queer child.”

The Queer Child and the only Prisoner soon became fast friends. Not that they were able to exchange much conversation at first, for his position disqualified him for social amenities, but his daily exercises in the castle yard, and Mercy's meanderings in the corridor before the grated guard-room afforded a few opportunities. In the beginning these were restricted to a little friendly nod and a cheery greeting. Then the little girl's heart yearned toward the sad-eyed, soft-spoken man, whose every word and gesture indicated gentle breeding.

“He's out o' the common, Miss Marcy,” said Sergeant Considine. “He's been in some trouble at home, I'll be bound, an' nothin'd do but he must get into more divilment over here.”

“Divilment?” queried Mercy.

“Beggin' your pardon, that's the Irish for — for mischief. Military mischief, to be sure, an' that's a thing any gintleman can engage in if he likes the risk. But sure he'd be a loss if there was anybody at all, at all to lose him.” The sergeant paused, remembering the commandant's strict orders that the word “execution” should

never be mentioned in the too sensitive hearing of the Queer Child.

" 'Tis heart trouble'll be after taking the Prisoner off," he concluded, vaguely. " But look-a-now, Miss Marcy, ye'll better be asking the commandant's leave to confab with the Prisoner. Your father's gintle with you, me little lady, but he's mighty particular, too."

The Prisoner gave her the same counsel.

" Your father has the right to forbid you to speak to me. Pray get his good-will." He spoke almost pleadingly. " My own little girl must be quite as tall as you by this time; my own little girl whom I never shall see again!"

" Ah!" Mercy's sympathetic sigh was mournfully deep. " I know! You have the heart trouble. So many prisoners have died of that. Is't not strange? One day they would be so strong and healthy-looking, and then the next day came the coffins. Sometimes two or three died in one day. And I felt very, very sad, but not so sorry as I should if you — Oh, but mayhap you'll get well," she resumed, gaily. " You are so big and so strong. You are the biggest man that I ever did see, and you're just as good as good, I think! I'm going to pray God every morning and every night that you may live and be happy with your little girl over the great sea."

The commandant was the sternest man in the

service, an inflexible martinet, who had never violated a promise or commuted a sentence. He had a soft spot in his heart for his motherless daughter; to all else he was adamant. But even the Queer Child had some difficulty in persuading him to accede to her request. "You know I like so few people, but I do like the Prisoner," she argued. "And, father, he has a little girl at home — a little girl like me! He'll never see her again, he says. Sergeant Considine says it's because the Prisoner is going to die of the heart trouble. Such a great, strong, tall man; isn't not a pity? He is like the giant Goliath, only that he is so good. Ah, how sorry his little daughter will be when she hears that the Prisoner is in his coffin! Oh, dear! oh, dear! Father, let me be his little friend! It is for so short a time. Sergeant Considine says the Prisoner will die before the New Year."

"Sergeant Considine, being Irish, is apt to say too much. Go, you may visit the Prisoner — no, stay; I will go with you."

Great was the Prisoner's surprise when he saw the commandant of the castle outside the grated door of the guard-room. Mercy looked at her friend and nodded ever so slightly. The commandant did not relax his habitual frown.

"Prisoner, my daughter has taken a fancy to visit you now and then. I have given her per-

mission, which I hope I may not have cause to regret. Despite all that has happened — ”

The pale giant flushed to the roots of his yellow hair. “ On my honor as an English gentleman — ” he began, but paused, for the commandant's hard face was lanced by a sarcastic smile. “ By the memory of my mother,” continued the Prisoner, more humbly, “ I swear that no word of — of all that has passed, or aught that is to come, shall be spoken by me. I thank you, sir, for this boon — ” But the commandant, waiving courtesy, gave a curt nod and departed.

After that the Prisoner and the Queer Child often talked, and sang together, and exchanged books through the grating. The Prisoner was fond of reading, and from her father's scanty collection Mercy procured for him odd numbers of the *Spectator* and the *Tatler*, a well-thumbed Shakespeare, Pope's Homer, a *Rasselas*, and a Burns. These, with the Bible, Poor Richard's Almanac, a classical dictionary, and a few volumes of military science, constituted all the available literature in the castle. Libraries were few and precious when the Republic was young, and newspapers were making no affidavits about circulation. News of the outer world drifted in slowly when steam power and telegraphy belonged to the great undiscovered.

One day in mid-December, when the tall,

brawny Prisoner and the little Queer Child were taking afternoon exercise together in the castle yard, the commandant received by special message an official packet sealed with black. Sad news, indeed! The great Washington was dead! The flag was hung at half-mast, and the chapel bell, old and cracked as it was, tolled for a full hour.

The fort was a relic of the old Dutch supremacy, and everything pertaining to it had become decrepit. "'Twould be a good work to pull it down altogether," grumbled Sergeant Considine. "Castle indeed! Th' old barracks is that shaky 'twill hardly hold up the flagpole. An' if there was a Prisoner of any spirit cooped up here, he'd have no great task breakin' the coop, I'm thinkin'."

The Irish soldier's irritation had almost treasonably overcome his discretion, for the Prisoner was within hearing, a fact which Considine pretended to ignore, as he continued his grumbling. "But, of course, the fort is on the island, an' the island is well guarded, if 'twas only by the water. — Miss Marcy, your father do be wantin' you. An' you, sir, orders is you're to stay inside hereafter!"

Mercy was gone. "The beginning of the end," murmured the Prisoner.

"If I can send a line to any creature, sir, or



“THE COMMANDANT RECEIVED AN OFFICIAL PACKET
SEALED WITH BLACK.”

if there's anything at all I can do before — or after — ”

“ Thank you, sergeant. Nothing, nothing. My own shall never know how I died. Let them think that I perished at sea. My name is already dead.”

“ Sure, I know we haven't your true name. An' that's the mystery of the mischief.” The sergeant was beginning to mutter to himself again, when the Prisoner spoke, huskily:

“ The little one — she will not know? ”

“ She's to go to the grandmother's in the city beyond to keep the Christmas.”

“ And when she returns I shall be — ”

The sergeant nodded, and began to whistle to give vent to his general dissatisfaction, as the Prisoner was marched to the guard-room.

A week before Christmas the black frost gripped the country. So intense was the cold that window-panes snapped like threads in a blaze, and the hardiest sleigh-horses fell dead by the wayside. “ She'll not go to the grandmother's in this weather,” muttered Sergeant Considine. “ An' the commandant'll go on with the black work, for he never yet separated the minute from the hour. Though how he'll keep her from knowin', I don't see, she's that fond of the Prisoner. The Lord have mercy upon him; a gallows death is a shameful end for a gentleman

like him! Ah, but many a brave lad in the old land went the same road last year — an' them with nothin' on their souls worse than the love of holy Ireland!"

On the 23d the intense cold was lessened by a thick, furry fall of snow. The frozen river was a white field between the city and the island. "The weather's like an Antrim woman's temper," growled the self-communing sergeant. "Now it's this, now it's that, and 'tis a wise man can foretell its high and low, so it is. But she'll be goin' to the grandmother's now, — and her boat will be the old sled!"

To his amazement, Sergeant Considine was ordered to accompany the party, which included Mercy and two negro slaves, the little girl's old nurse, and the gardener-groom.

"He's fearin' I'd help the Prisoner," was the Irishman's first thought. "Me, an American soldier, assist the enemy of me country — of both me countries? — an Englishman! Though I'm that sorry for him an' that mystified about him, I feel like — like runnin' away to France an' listin' under young Bonaparte. Now Ginerel Washington's dead, what's the use of bein' an American soldier anyways? — a rusty fixture in a tumble-down old barracks!"

Very grim was the sergeant's face as he mounted beside Sambo on the clumsy old sleigh.

The commandant was bidding Mercy good-by, and the surgeon, a stout, merry, peace-idle veteran of the Revolution, awaited his turn. The Queer Child was a pretty picture in her bearskin coat and cap and her deerskin leggings and moccasins. "Oh, the Prisoner!" she cried. "Father, I must say good-by to the Prisoner!"

"I believe you must," muttered her father. "Perkins, Murray, bring the Prisoner here!"

He came between the guards, a blond giant towering above their heads. His good-by was beautifully solemn in its very cheerfulness. "Take good care of the Prisoner, Doctor Hervey!" cried the Queer Child. "Try to cure his heart trouble, won't you? Good-by again, father!"

Slowly the Prisoner turned toward the castle. The commandant clasped his little girl in a farewell embrace. Considine was first to see what was happening, yet though he sprang from the sleigh with the agility of a deer, the Prisoner was before him. The great block of stone, carved with the arms of Holland, and which for more than a century had retained its place of honor at the summit of the western pillar, was toppling over. The keen Black Frost blade had split the cement. "This way!" shrieked Doctor Hervey, and "Come out here!" at the same moment yelled the sergeant. Father and daughter stood

still. It was only the fraction of an instant, and then their bewildered senses realized that a mighty arm had pushed them out of danger. But who was the giant stretched there motionless, the blood welling from his bosom? Alas, the poor Prisoner!

"Glory be to God! Glory be!" shouted Con-sidine. "Here's the death of a hero! an' the death your own lady-mother might have wished for you, ma bouchal!"

The emotional Irishman was on his knees sobbing. The doctor knelt, too, to examine the unconscious giant. "It may not be death," said the good little man, with a praiseworthy attempt at professional coolness. "Ah, the shoulder is badly crushed!" He put his ear to the Prisoner's heart.

"If you please, I don't believe the stone more'n grazed him." Private Perkins was speaking. "I never see anything like it. He just pushed the commandant and Miss Mercy with one hand, and he kind o' heaved the stone aside with his shoulder."

"Is he dead, Hervey?" The commandant's voice was unnaturally low and gentle.

"Not he! He'll pull through all right. A fine type of a man — splendid physique — eh, I'd forgot! But it's a pity — a genuine pity to sacrifice him."

The Prisoner opened his eyes wearily.

"Not dead? Dying, then?" he asked, faintly.

The doctor shook his head, and the sufferer's eyelids closed again, while tears coursed down the pale cheeks as he murmured, in a dreary monotone: "I did not intend self-murder; but when I lost sense I hoped it was my worthless life going —"

"I can't stand this!" cried the little doctor. "Steen, we were lads together, you and I; let me speak!" But he couldn't speak, after all, and Considine's ever-ready tongue came to the rescue.

"The doctor would be meanin' that the morrow is Christmas Day, sir. For the sake of Christ, sir!"

"What do you mean?" cried Mercy, who all the while had been held rigidly by her father. "He is better; Doctor Hervey knows he is in no danger."

The commandant loosened his nervous clasp, and bending, whispered:

"Johnson! I say, Mr. Johnson!" No response.

"Try Hilton," suggested Considine, in tones unnecessarily loud.

"Who calls me?" The sad gray eyes opened again, and the Prisoner sat up straight, making a wry face as the lacerated shoulder "spoke in pain."

“I am saying ‘Pardon.’ Do you hear? I must secure your pardon! You have saved my life and the life dearer than mine own.”

The commandant paused, struggling with emotion, and Mercy, as bewildered as ever, looked appealingly at Considine, who was laughing through his tears.

“Tell her, doctor, that the fall of the stone has cured the Prisoner’s heart trouble forever an’ ever, amen. Ye won’t? Well, then, I’ll be after tellin’ her myself. There they go. Nabocklish. I believe I’m actin’ commandant this day! Sambo, you’d better turn the horses toward the stable. Don’t you see Miss Marcy followin’ the Prisoner-Gineral an’ his staff into the castle? She’ll not leave the island this Christmas. Glory be, it’s the happy day we’ll be havin’ the morrow!”

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE BACK PORCH

WHEN we were small folk, we used to hold some very profound discussions. One of these was, "Which is the saddest thing to say?" Frank thought "Nevermore" the essence of melancholy, and my favorite saddest phrase was "After many years." I said that change must hold sorrowful surprises for us. After many years the young and blooming grow old and wither, and the old people wither and die. But Frank held that "Nevermore" was more hopeless. We appealed to Nana, who did not find either especially sad, she having her own pet phrase of melancholy, which was, "God be with you; good-by forever!"

Time proves all things. Let us look at the Story-Book House "after many years." It is October, mellow, beautiful October, the jewel-month of the American year. The mountain roadsides are fringed with chicory, blue and white, and with starry asters, white and purple;

the slopes are ablaze with goldenrod; toad-flax, wild carrot — “Queen Anne’s lace” — and everlasting-flowers are running races across the fields; tall, velvet-skirted mullein-stalks are crowned with yellow blooms; the sweet evening-primrose, fearless of the gentle October sun, remains unclosed all day now; the morning-glory is the glory of the evening as well, its purple chalices open wide to the delicious warmth that is not heat, to the coolness that is not cold. The poke-bushes are rich with the pendulous clusters of black berries from which the country folk obtain ink for their scanty correspondence and irregular accounts; Jack-in-the-pulpit has preached himself into a bunch of red berries close to the ground; the wild rose-bushes are red-berried, too. The milkweed pods have burst, the white downy silken seed-messengers are flying hither and thither; we have captured bagfuls of them for the filling of sofa-pillows.

And oh, the crimson and golden glory of our trees! the maples, with every leaf a flower, the yellow oaks, the sumachs blazing blood-red along the roadsides! Everywhere the squirrels are cutting their teeth upon the nut-trees; you can almost hear their gnawing; perhaps you could but for the autumnal music, tenor and baritone of tree-toad and katydid, soprano chirping of cricket, all rather faint now, but tuned to concert

pitch at evenfall. It is the glorious Indian Summer, but the days will be growing colder and grayer with the lengthening nights. Almost time to close the doors of the Story-Book House!

In the garden the monthly roses sweeten the paths; we shall have roses next month, too; some years, we have gathered a few of our fragrant "ever-bloomers" as late as mid-December. There is a wealth of China asters, but the glory of the autumn garden is centred in the beds of cosmos, great, vari-colored sunbursts of bloom. Gladiolus and tuberose have passed their prime; already we have prepared our lily clumps and crocus beds and our tulip and hyacinth borders for the spring. Eight months of the year our mountain garden is fragrant and aglow with bloom; for the rest of the time we are content with our greenhouse tropicalities.

The back porch runs all across the width of the house, in true Southern fashion, just as the kitchen is detached from the residence proper. It was Grandmamma who had the passage between kitchen and dining-room roofed and glassed into a pantry. So separate is it from the cook's quarters that the back porch is quite as attractive as the verandah. You see, our desks are out here yet; we write on the back porch in the mornings when the sun is on the verandah: we believe

in living in the open air as long as the weather permits.

Bobo's rocky-horse and his train of choo-choo cars stand peaceably together in the corner waiting for their little master, who has gone to town with papa and Auntie Nell this morning. The Virginia creeper is a glory of crimson rambling up the sides of the old porch. From the steps you can hear the apples dropping in the orchard, and you may see the "mile of grapes" — a fruit line of which we are immensely proud. We have Concords, Catawbas, Delawares, Niagaras, Wyomings, and several other less-known varieties, and we have one very sweet, aromatic grape of our own production, which we call the Ambrosia, — you know for whom. Dear, dear Brose, after all these years, I cannot speak your beloved name, I cannot write it without my weak tribute of tears to your darling memory, little brother of the long ago!

Oh, yes, there have been changes and changes in the Story-Book House, since that June-time on the verandah in the first chapter. We haven't altered the dear old place; we wouldn't displace one stone of its venerable pile, one tree from its hallowed setting. But the lawns are velvet-smooth nowadays, the garden and orchard are given luxuriant care; we have introduced electric lights in the house and on the grounds; we have

built a greenhouse; we have restored the old billiard-room and the conservatory, the stables, and the kennels, and in one corner of the great roomy old garret we have fitted up and colonized an aviary, which is one of the wonders of the latter-day Story-Book House. The schoolroom is unchanged; the nursery is still the pet room of the house. To the library we have added new books, a new cabinet, and a telephone. No other changes in the Story-Book House? Alas! that this were all. "After many years," after many years we look back, and some of our milestones are tombstones: it must be so in the happiest life.

To take up the last threads, and to gather them into the knot of "finis"—that is what I must do this balmy October morning on the back porch of the Story-Book House.

Well, Frank and Camp were graduated with honors; the unclassified honor of class popularity belonged to Frank, who made the reputation of the football eleven in the year 189-, and whose "sublime nerve," as the reporters put it, helped to send Harvard's crew flying ahead of Princeton, Cornell, Yale, and Pennsylvania in the regatta at Poughkeepsie the following year.

His work in class was not quite so brilliant; an athlete seldom has time or taste for the grind of regular study. But Frank learned quickly all

he wished to learn, and forgot nothing. As Camp told us, he speedily developed his gift of oratory, perhaps because it was natural, and came easy to him. With his quick comprehension and retentive memory, his ready wit and perfect savoir-faire, his mellow voice and handsome presence, you may judge whether or no Mr. Francis Curtis Storey found it difficult to captivate his hearers whenever he chose to speak. The old professors believed that young Storey was destined to revive the classic traditions of American oratory, but truth to say, Frank has none of the grandiose style of the old-time speech-makers, and his addresses sound very much better than they read. It's just the contrary with Camp.

Camp — of course he was dubbed Campus as soon as he began his undergraduate career — Camp was Frank's mentor. He kept my impulsive, self-willed, much-flattered brother away from dangerous associates; he watched over him like an elder brother, — nay, like a father. You might think that he was twenty years older than Frank, so serious was he in his guardianship. They quarrelled often, I'm sure, but Camp's coolness generally brought Frank to his senses. Camp was reasonably interested in athletics; shell, gridiron, and gym were but means by which he kept himself in training for the mental work,

which, to him, seemed to be the most important part of college life. He made no records on field or river: he was content to be first man of his class, — “a regular grind, old Campus.”

During the boys' first Christmas vacation, we learned that we were to lose dear Uncle Papa. You recollect my telling you in the “Christmas Story” chapter that Uncle Papa had been summoned to Washington on Christmas Eve? The law firm which had traced him to Storeytown had strange tidings for Uncle Papa. The day after Christmas he made his appearance in the Story-Book House, a most dejected Uncle Papa, pale-faced, red-eyed, sorrowful. When Grandpapa saw that our friend was in trouble he took him by the hand. “You have heard bad news, perhaps?” he said.

“Bad indeed, Colonel Storey. I have word from Colmar in Alsace that my nearest living relative, my cousin Emil, is dead.”

He handed a foreign letter to Grandpapa, a communication from a notary, to the effect that Monsieur Emil Papelonne, having died unmarried, the estate fell to the next of kin, Monsieur Adolph Papelonne, who was requested to return to Colmar for the settlement of the property.

“And Emil was five years younger than I,” said dear Uncle Papa, with a sob in his voice.

"Who could think he should be the first to die?"

"Is the estate large?" asked Grandpapa.

"Too large for me," replied good Uncle Papa.

So, at the dinner given in honor of Captain Storey, Uncle Papa was really the man of the hour. He had grown so attached to us, and especially to little Brose, that his leave-taking remains one of the sorrowful remembrances of my life. We could not be brought to understand why he need settle abroad.

"Why don't you sell the property in Alsace, and come over here and buy a fine new house?" said Frank.

"The property is a family estate; it has belonged to the Papelonnes for as long as Mount-Stuart has belonged to the Storeys," explained Uncle Papa, with some dignity.

"Well, I'm sure I shouldn't hesitate to sell this old place if I wanted a modern house in a livelier neighborhood," declared the elder son of the Story-Book House. Grandpapa looked at him with grim displeasure; making no comment at the time, he never forgot Frank's thoughtless speech.

"Emil should have married," complained Uncle Papa, addressing himself to Grandpapa. "A landowner should be the head of a family, certainly."

"You will go home, and marry some nice young girl?" Uncle Papa shook his head. Madame looked at him for an instant, and then turned her eyes away, as Grandpapa repeated, "Yes, a nice young girl, and you must bring Madame Papelonne on a visit to the United States, while I am still master of Mount Stuart."

Uncle Papa took the train for New York the next day, and sailed for Antwerp. We have never seen him since, but we have not forgotten him. He used to write to Brose regularly, always over the old signature "Uncle Papa." But the letters ceased for a time, and then, one day, we received a flat package from over the sea, and over the Rhine. Opening it, we found a large photograph of dear Uncle Papa, all dressed up in frock coat style, and beside him a pretty, plump, German-looking young girl wearing a white veil and a wreath of orange blossoms. So Monsieur and Madame Papelonne settled down in the old house, and there is little fear that lawyers will have to advertise again, for next of kin, for Uncle Papa has two fine, fat little sons of his own at this writing. We mean to visit him the next time we go to Europe; we should have gone before, but really, Alsace is terribly out of the way.

After graduation Frank entered the law school, and Camp set to work to get his M. D.,

from the University of Pennsylvania. Not that Campion Storey ever wished to be a doctor: he studied medicine merely in order to satisfy his father, who, like many other fathers, very sagely believed that the profession of letters is just no profession at all. Indeed, Camp always maintains that his medical knowledge has been of invaluable service to him in his work. Long before he had done with pillule and scalpel, he was the author of several "little things" in the magazines. Trifles, mostly; quatrains, triolets, rondeaux.

When Frank was ready to enter the law-firm of Curtis and Curtis (now Curtis, Curtis and Storey) in New York, Camp held an appointment as resident physician in St. Roch's Hospital, at Washington. Before the year's end, his first play had been accepted by the Mansfield management, and so our young doctor never gained more than his hospital practice, for "The Man of Many Markets" ran one hundred nights in New York alone, and Doctor Campion Storey's portrait was full-paged in all the illustrated weeklies that season. He has written a play every year since, and only one of these has been shelved.

Mrs. Campion — "Aunt Alma," as she wished us to call her — was very proud of her nephew's success. Her great fortune was to go to him at her death: she was very anxious to see

him settled "suitably." So, when he sought the society of the beautiful Miss Moncrieff, daughter of the millionaire Senator, Aunt Alma was delighted. Grace Moncrieff had looks, birth, culture, wealth: she was just the bride for Campion Storey. So far as I could see, however, Miss Grace distributed her favors equally, although, if she seemed to show any preference, certainly Camp and Frank were the most fortunate among her many admirers. Camp and Frank! — the conjunction turned me cold with apprehension. Was there to be ill-feeling between them, after all?

I had an excellent opportunity for observing them during our house party the following June. It was a small gathering; Madame, as usual, en route to Quebec, helped me to receive and entertain our guests. Miss Moncrieff and Mabel Webster arrived in charge of Mrs. Campion; Nellie and I had two school friends, Brenda Forrester from Baltimore, and Janet Babbington, a cousin from Richmond. Besides Camp and Frank and Brose, — dear Brose was a great fellow of eighteen, then, with West Point in easy view, — we had John and David Curtis from New York, and Doctor Webster, a cousin of Mabel's from Philadelphia.

Frank had grown to be "a perfect Adonis," as Brenda Forrester said; tall, well-built, blond:

He was — and is — exquisitely neat about his dress, and most exact regarding its formal suitability for the occasion in hand. No one looks so well as he in golf and tennis flannels, in boating ducks, in shooting leather, in Prince Albert, Tuxedo, or claw-hammer; his very smoking jacket seems to be the fatigue uniform of a prince. And, indeed, that one word “ princely ” most aptly describes the appearance of the Honorable Francis. “ He makes all the rest of us look like snobs, confound him ! ” grumbled David Curtis.

This was an exaggeration. Frank’s associates were all gentlemen, and looked it. David himself was a dear boy, a handsome, manly fellow, wonderfully manly indeed for a musician. For David Curtis had an extraordinary gift : he could charm the most thoughtless of us into a dreamful hush as he sat there at the piano in the twilight, compelling divine harmonies from the keys. At such times he used to look at me if I were within reach of his deep, dark eyes, — gazing until I felt that his very spirit borne on the wings of sweet strains was melting into my soul. Ever since I left school, David had been my most loyal admirer; latterly he had grown very serious; twice he had asked me to be his wife; and I, doubting myself, could not as yet give him a final answer. Frank, in his usual careless, self-absorbed way, had no

idea that David was striving to become his brother-in-law, but Camp took the most brotherly interest in our affair.

You could not call Camp an Adonis. He is tall, — six feet two, — an inch and a half taller than Frank. His shoulders are quite square, and his legs tremendously long. He is — to use his own phrase — “clean, but not neat.” He has never worn a frock-coat in the evening, nor an evening coat before six P. M., but in minor details of dress, he has none of Frank’s almost feminine exquisiteness.

Camp has a firm, kindly face, a massive forehead, quick, watchful, hazel eyes, and thin silky brown hair. He is an omniverous reader, but his liking for outdoor exercise balances his inclination for study, so that his physique is in no way inferior to his mental make-up. His fondness for horseback riding amounts almost to a passion. Ever since he grew up he has owned good horses. He is fond of all kinds of animals, however; — you should see his magnificent dogs! On the whole, you will perceive that Camp is a fine fellow, quite as attractive, in his way, as our handsome Frank. Camp is deep; Frank is open. Frank has a temper easily aroused, and as easily soothed; Camp’s temper, when awakened, is a raging fire held under manful control.

So much for the two suitors of Miss Grace

Moncrieff. I was most uneasy about their unfortunate rivalry as the days went by. The third evening I was so distracted that I said "no" to David Curtis without thinking of what I was doing. It was his third refusal. "I'm afraid you mean it, Stella," he said, gently; "I shall go home to-morrow."

"No, — wait," said I, irresolutely unhappy. "Something may happen to help me to make up my mind. Indeed, David, I don't know myself!"

Something did happen, something quite unforeseen.

The next day I saw that I had reason to be sorry for poor Camp. For Frank was really in love with Grace at last; hitherto he had been playing at admiration. And I knew that he would not permit any one to stand in his way; he had not the faintest idea of sacrificing his feelings for the benefit of Campion Storey. He exerted himself to please; Grace was fascinated; indeed, few could resist Frank.

Madame saw, too, and she was vexed. "Your brother is handsome, clever, but he is not nearly so — so — what shall I say? — so character-full as Campion. The girl must be blinded in the eyes of her mind. I wish it had been so that Campion had fallen in love with you, Estelle. Cousin, — bah, a third cousin! No, as you say, you are like brother and sister. But I could wish

it were otherwise. He will break his heart for this Miss Moncrieff; his feelings are too deep."

Too deep for Madame. The engagement was announced at dinner that evening. Aunt Alma was furious with Camp, and inclined to be resentful to Frank, but my oratorical brother soon won her to his side.

"I hope you will be happy all the days of your life, my beautiful new sister," I said, as I kissed Grace.

"How can I help being happy with Frank?" she made answer, her lovely eyes alight with pride and joy.

"But, oh, Grace, poor Camp!"

"My dear little magnolia-blossom, I couldn't marry both of them. He'll get over it after a time: more than he will have to recover from the news of my engagement!" Her radiant egotism was a thing for me to wonder over, but who could blame her, so beautiful, so admired?

Where was Camp? I found him in the farthest corner of the verandah, a cigar between his fingers. He did not seem to know that it had not been lit; his head was bowed. From the drawing-room windows on the other side gay voices floated out, but here were silence and sadness.

"Won't you come in, Camp? Oh, Camp, I am so sorry!"

"I know," he said, his voice husky with repressed pain. "But I can't stand it; I must go away. I think I shall go to London for a few years. I have to see about the English production of my play, in any case. Don't waste your pity on me, Stella; I'm a born fighter."

"We shall be sorry to lose you," I murmured. "But you will come back to us heart-whole, or maybe — maybe you'll see some lovely English girl —"

"Never!" he stormed. "How you misjudge me! There never was, — there never will be but one. I don't think I'm very conceited, but if you could know how I have looked forward — Well, it is wrong to talk this way now. Dear Stella, dear little sister, I hope you may be as happy as I wish you to be. Is the date set?"

"Oh, I don't think they've decided that yet," I answered, my heart aching for him.

"They?"

"Frank and Grace."

"What have they to do with your marriage?"

"My marriage, Camp? I shall never be married, I think."

"But David Curtis —"

"I have just refused him for the third time. Camp, Camp, did you, do you — wasn't it Grace, Camp?"

"Oh, Stella, little white flower of my heart!

it has never been any one but you. Shall I go to London, Stella? ”

What did I say? Well, I knew, all in a moment, that I loved him dearly and for ever. I couldn't have dared to tell myself so much while I thought he belonged to another. “Camp, I am the happiest girl in Maryland,” I whispered. “You shall be the happiest woman in the world, if I can make you so,” my great, brainy, tender, generous Camp made answer. And he has kept his word.

How surprised they were when my tall betrothed brought me in on his arm, and stood smiling at them. Grandpapa guessed in an instant.

“Campion!” he said; and said no more, looking his question.

“This young lady declares that she can never change her name,” said Camp, with one forgivably triumphant glance at David. “Miss Storey has consented to be Mrs. Storey.”

“Oh, you sly little magnolia-flower! ‘Poor Camp’ indeed!” cried Grace. I think she believes to this day that I was merely a consolation for her loss.

“It might have been worse,” admitted Mrs. Campion, proceeding to scold us both for what she was pleased to call “hoodwinking” her.

“It is perfect, perfect!” exclaimed Madame, in rapture.

I could see that Grandpapa was wonderfully pleased. "You will not take her away from me, Champion?" he pleaded. And I said that I could never be happy anywhere but in the Story-Book House.

There was a very fashionable wedding in Washington early in October that year, when Miss Moncrieff was married to Mr. Francis Curtis Storey. A week later Champion and I were married quietly in our own dear little mountain church. We went off to Montana for a short wedding-trip, and my father-in-law, then Major Storey, came home with us for a visit.

A sorrowful piece of news awaited me. Dear Nana had changed my wedding-robcs for the travelling-gown; she would allow no one else to have a hand in my dressing that happy day. She had kissed me fondly, with "God be with you — good-by!" — she did not add the "forever" of her saddest phrase, but forever it was to be. They found her next morning, smiling and peaceful, calmly at rest at the end of her faithful life. She had died during the night, without warning and without pain, the easy death of serene old age.

Grandpapa missed her sadly; she was the one link between the old life and the new. After Christmas Doctor Cleary came to see us, and he and I stood together at Nana's grave, still clover-

green that mild December day. The years had aged our Student doubly beyond their length of time: he was a grave man, full of responsibility, and weighted with the cares of a great city parish. He seemed to have grown away from us, so many and deep were the daily interests of his life, but he and Grandpapa remained as intimate as ever. At great inconvenience to himself, he travelled all the way to Mount Stuart twice during that winter; he was most uneasy for Grandpapa's health. He made Camp promise to send a telegram in case of danger. Of course they kept all their anxieties from me, and, indeed, Grandpapa had more vitality than they thought, for he lived a full year after their consultation. When my baby was placed in his arms, he murmured, "God be thanked, I have lived to see my children even unto the third generation!"

He would have the baby named Ambrose, although we wished our first-born to be called Calvert Cecil, after Grandpapa. We thought then that he meant to perpetuate the memory of his only son, my father, but afterwards, oh, afterwards we believed that his desire was prophetic! For Brose — I might as well tell it now, though the very telling is pain inexpressible to me. Brose — is — dead. There! I have said it. So young, so brave, so beautiful, so loving — my own Brose! . . . The words are dancing madly

in the crystal light of tears. Oh, I know, I know I should be reconciled by this time! but he was so dear, so very dear to me. I shall be quiet presently . . . and then, then I can tell you . . . how he died.

It was three months after Grandpapa's death, at the time of the Hudson River Railway accident opposite the Point. Brose and two of his classmates were just about to return from Garrison to West Point by the ferry, when the dire catastrophe occurred, the whole train falling down the embankment. The cadets, though they had but a short leave of absence, hastened to see if they could be of any service. They helped the surviving train-men and passengers to rescue the injured and to remove the dead from the wreck. One of the cadets fancied that he heard the cry of a little child; he clambered into the half-submerged day-coach, and found there a poor woman quite dead, her hair trailing in the water, and in her arms, held rigidly high and dry, a living baby. The cadet caught the child to his breast and attempted to return through the broken window, when, without warning, the whole coach overturned on its slippery, sandy foundation, and slid into the river. He was not drowned; the doctors said that his head had been struck against the side of the car as it overturned, killing him instantly. The poor little baby was

suffocated. They found them together, the child clasped in the arms of the young cadet. . . . The cadet was Brose. . . .

No, I know I should not mourn; he died the death of a hero; he gave his life, though in vain, to save another. . . . And our Lord, who so loves little children, oh, I know how He must have welcomed my brave, pure-hearted brother, who passed through the gates of eternity, leading by the hand a little child! . . . Of such is the Kingdom, yes. And some day I shall come to be proud of his death; some day I shall bear to hear his name . . . not yet. My little son is Bobo; by and by we shall call him by his baptismal name — Ambrose. There are too many memories shrined in the old pet name of my young soldier-brother Brose.

Frank and Grace have been living in Washington since Frank was elected to Congress, the youngest member of the House, and, his constituents believe, the most brilliant. His masterly speech on foreign alliances “placed” him instantly; whenever he speaks now, listeners expect to hear something out of the ordinary, and the “silver-tongued” Honorable Francis Curtis Storey seldom disappoints them. He and Grace entertain largely; they are very wealthy. Mrs. Campion was so pleased with Frank’s marriage

that she placed half a million to his credit on his wedding-day. He has trebled the sum since in "ground floor" speculation.

His fortune and his wife's great inheritance place them among the plutocrats of New York and Washington. Their New York house is a marvel of luxury; their servants are imported from England; they wine and dine every European celebrity that comes to these shores, and when they go abroad they are entertained by the nobility, not for their wealth alone, I believe, but because of the Storey and Manus and Gratiot ancestry of which Frank has grown so proud that he — or is it Grace? — has set up coat of arms, crest, and family livery. They have no children; whenever they visit us they are devoted to our sturdy son, Bobo, and to our baby daughter Florence, who is named for Campion's mother.

Pray do not think that Camp's aunt was unjust when she gave a fortune to Frank, and nothing at all to Camp, her near relation. Campion and I think that Aunt Alma has a perfect right to do what she pleases with her own. And doubtless she felt, as we did, that Frank ought to have money of his own when he was marrying an heiress. Aunt Alma often says: "My dears, when I die, everything will go to you and to your children," but Aunt Alma is a nice, plump, hand-

some, middle-aged lady, with no more notion of death than we have, — hardly so much. We shall be satisfied if she continues to take an interest in Nellie, who, just now, is her prime favorite.

My young sister is very lovely; tall and fair, patrician in appearance, in manner, in voice. We are all very proud of Nellie; Frank because she is a “thoroughbred beauty,” Camp and I because we know that our sister’s mind is as noble as her face, her nature as sweet as her voice. Frank calls her Goldilocks, but we know her to be Heart of Gold. She is a beauty, yes, but she has none of the self-consciousness which so often mars otherwise perfect beauty. Nellie’s blue eyes hold a gentle seriousness, an expression of innocent timidity which you do not see in other fair faces.

Aunt Alma confidently expects her to make a great match, but Nellie has made no choice, and I fancy that the “throng” of admirers of which Aunt Alma speaks so triumphantly bore my dear girl immensely, although she is too sweet to say so. If she could be spoiled, Mrs. Campion, Frank and Grace, and all the “connections” would have had her head turned by this time, but she is always glad to get home. She loves the old place dearly, as I do, and as Brose did. Frank, strange to say, cares nothing for Mount Stuart; a new brown-stone mansion in a great city means more to him than does the historic Storey House.

Grandpapa knew this. It was one of the reasons (our comparative poverty at the time was another) why he left the Story-Book House to us instead of to his eldest grandson.

Are we poor? Not at all; we are quite well-to-do. Of course, by comparison with the Honorable Francis and his wife and their millionaire friends, we may seem to be quite beggarly poor. We haven't a bit of gold plate; we are content with the cumbrous old family silver. I have Grandmamma Storey's jewels, but they pale before my sister-in-law's "tiara" of first-water diamonds, her diamond and ruby necklaces, her "ropes" of pearls. All these seem to belong to Grace; they suit her tropically glowing brunette beauty, her queenly height and bearing. I am such a little thing among all my big people! As Camp says, there's nothing large about me but my eyes and my views.

I don't care much for society, neither does Camp, but we like to entertain our friends occasionally. In the fishing and hunting seasons, and at Christmas, the Story-Book House is filled with congenial guests, who are good enough to say that they consider our mountain house parties quite the jolliest affairs of the year. But there are between-times when we do not care to be interrupted. As I said to dear old Madame (who still proceeds semi-annually from New Orleans to

MountStuart, from MountStuart to Quebec and back, and who, very likely, will continue her peregrinations to the end of her days) :

“ We’re not butterflies, Grandme; we are bees, Campion and I; the Story-Book House ought to be renamed the Beehive.”

“ No, it is truly more than ever the Story-Book House,” said Madame Grandme. “ Campion, he makes great stories for the player-folks’ public, and you, Estelle, you make little stories for the little playing-folk public. Storeys of stories, both: *mais oui*, it is the veritable Story-Book House! ”

Yes, Camp is a successful playwright, and I — I love to write stories for the growing-up people. We work together very often, dramatist and story-teller. Although we have little need of much money, I have quite a respectable income from my little books, while Campion’s royalties are nothing less than munificent. The English rights of his latest drama, “ A Trusty Villain,” have been sold for ten thousand dollars, not half of what he has earned in its American production. Campion Storey is famous, and cares little for fame. His heart is divided between love for his work and love for his home, with all that the word “ home ” means to him, his loving and well-beloved wife and comrade, his fair, strong children, and that dear old nest, sweetly redolent

of past joys and sorrows, overflowing with present happiness, and ready for whatever the future may bring — *The Story-Book House*.

Dear, dear old house! From verandah to back porch, from the spacious attic, with its wardrobes and chests packed with musky and lavender-scented fineries, some of them dating back to the fine old first-Presidential days, its one living section brilliant and melodious with the bird-life of Camp's aviary, — from this storied garret down to the queer old Colonial cellar, tunnelled with the subterranean passage constructed in times of Indian terror, — from north to south, from east to west, from chimney to foundation, — every stone, shred, splinter of the Story-Book House has its own story to tell. So many, many stories, and I have told so few!

As the old romancers used to say, — farewell, gentle reader! The Story-Book House is only a mile from Storeytown; — travelling is easy in pleasant weather and with pleasant company. Perhaps we may meet again? In the meantime, subtracting eternity from Nana's sad adieu — God be with you; good-by!

THE END.

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ARTHUR M. WINFIELD

pseud

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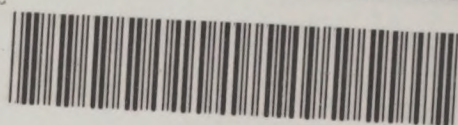
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